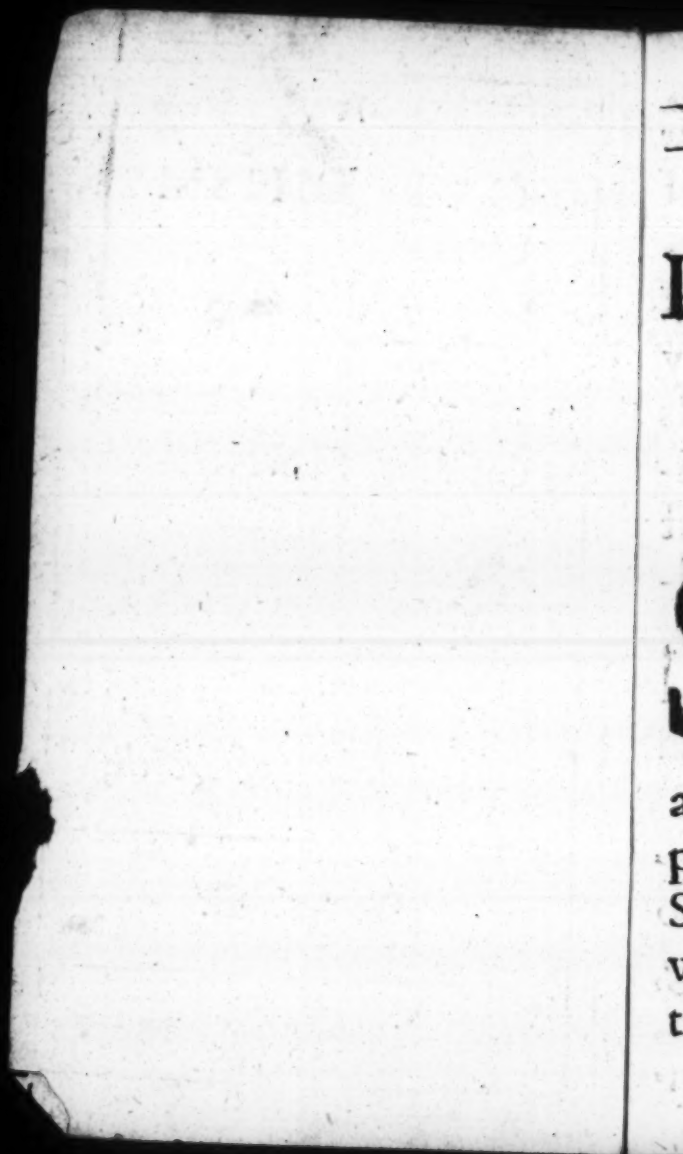


A
CATECHISM
OF
PENANCE,
Guiding SINNERS
Unto a True
CONVERSION.

Translated out of French,

By W. B.

Printed for M. T. 1685.



THE
PREFACE
Of The
Author,

Such is the necessity of the Vertue of Penance, that the Salvation of a Sinner is as wholly, without it, Impossible, as the Loss of his Soul is Inevitable. From whence we cannot but gather, how dangerous; yea,

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how pernicious that Errour is, the false Maxims of which Adulterate this Vertue, bereaving Sinners of the last and best Means they have, to shake off the Bonds of Sin, to escape Damnation, to recover the lost Grace, and Favour of Almighty God; and, finally, to secure the eternal and main Concern of their own Souls.

Is it not then a thing truly deplorable, to behold so many Christians, abusing, in so important a Point, them-

Of the Author.

themselves? What greater Blindness, than, not knowing, or not having a Will to know, what that Interiour Disposition of the Soul ought to be, whereon the Vertue of true Penance chiefly depends, to presume to Judge of the Conversion of a Sinner, rather by the fair words he too often gives; or some other sensible motion he perhaps feels, than by any change, which appears in his Conversation, or amendment in his Life.

Nor are they wanting,

A 4 who

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who think Penance, and true Sorrow for Sin, to be but the bare effect of some natural advantage. a Soul meets, by birth, withal ; and which depends not but on the Will alone. Now these Men mistake each little Resentment, we are wont to experience, each Act of dislike, which the meer prospect of a disordered Life, or other human Considerations, are apt to excite, for an undoubted mark of true Penance ; that is to say, for a true and real Conversion of the Heart. From

Of the Author.

From which so Erronious
an Opinion, it questionless,
proceeds, that notwithstanding
so frequent a resort to
the Tribunal of Penance, so
small fruit of Reformation
appears, so few merit the
Grace of the Remission of
their Sins; never were more
Confessions seen, and never
the number of true Converts
less; which is to say, never
were false, and counterfeit
Penitents more numerous;
never real and true more
rare. For what imports the
word *Penance*, but *Conversi-*

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on; and where no Change,
no Conversion of the Heart
is wrought, Penance cannot
be, but abusively so
called.

This so frequent use of
the Sacrament of Penance,
doth not only not render the
greatest part of Christians
better; but, by a just Judgment
of God, and the abuse
they make thereof, causeth
them, instead of mollifying
the Heart, to become more
obdurate in their Crimes, and
consequently to draw down
in lue of Benedictions, the
Wrath

Of the Author.

Wrath of Heaven on their
own Heads.

Nay, how many approach
not unto the Sacraments, but
on design the better to nou-
rish their Impieties; think-
ing to hide so foul a visage
under so fair a mask of seem-
ing Vertue. The usual Dress
indeed, under which Hypo-
crites disguising themselves,
seek to appear in the Eye of
others, better than indeed
they are. Such is the Ma-
lice, Such the Impiety of so
many pretenders at least to
Christianity, that they sur-

pass

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pass therein the Infidels themselves, whom God hath not called to the Knowledg of himself.

So decay'd at present is the Spirit of Christianity become, that but from time to time to confess and communicate, is to have made a fair advance in the way of a Spiritual Life; though scarce doth a Month only pass; yea, too often a far less time, without a relapse into mortal Sin. To frequent with diligence the Sacraments, be our Failings what they will,

Of the Author.

is to lead, in the Language of the World, a devout Life; little reflecting that those pretended Acts of Piety, how goodly soever in appearance, are yet, when unaccompanied with true Contrition, when without a real Conversion of the Heart, but so many Acts indeed of Sacrilege, rendring the Soul more culpable in the Eye of Heaven, than before.

They Imagin that the sole Use of the Sacraments cannot but argue a great stock of Vertue, but heed
not

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not the want of due dispositions requisite thereunto; perswading themselves, they may be laudably received, though with an Heart wholly intent to the heaping up of Riches, wholly swayed by Vanity, by Ambition; wholly thirsting after Pleasures, after Divertilements; wholly charmed by other sensual Allurements: As if the opposite Maxims of the World and Gospel could be reconcil'd; or Grace of *Jesus Christ* be drawn with the pravity of our Wills to an accord.

• *Of the Author.*

I have then, to the end to apply a Remedy to so growing a Mischief, and dissipate, if possible, those false Lights, which are indeed but Darkness, composed this small Treatise, wherein I have endeavoured to Inform, with Grace its assistance, even the meanest Capacities, what Interiour Dispositions are required unto true Penance; as also the esteem we ought to have of so singular a Benefit, transcending all Deserts of ours, and only to be purchased through the pure Mer-

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Mercies of God, and Merits of his only Son *Jesus Christ*. The means also we are to make use of, in order to the obtaining thereof, are here expressed; as also the Method to be observed in the Examining of our selves, to the end to avoid the danger of being deceived in so weighty a concern, which the want of Knowledge to discern between false and true Contrition, cannot but cast us Irrevocably into:

I heartily beseech the Goodness of God to grant

Of the Author.

a Blessing to this little Work,
and water with the abundant Dew of his Grace the Hearts of Sinners, that being Converted, they may bring forth Fruits worthy of Penance.

There are also annexed to the Instructions relating unto Penance (which are digested in a Catechistical Form, by way of Dialogue) certain devout Exercises and Meditations, such as I judg'd most proper to beget, and nourish in us a sence of true Contrition: the two First
are

The Preface, &c.

are taken from *St. Anselme*,
to wit, the second and third
of those of that holy Father,
according to the rank as-
sign'd them in the last Edi-
tion of his Works. The o-
thers are with more Method
compos'd, according to
those Rules prescrib'd for
Meditation, which seem to
be the most natural, and
freest from constraint.

THE

The APPROBATIONS of
this CATECHISM in the
FRENCH Tongue, Given by
Doctors of the THEOLOGICAL
Faculty of PARIS;

Faithfully Translated.

I. Approbation.

I Under-written Doctor and
Professour in Divinity of
the House and Society of
Sorbonne, do by these
Certify, That I have read a lit-
tle Book, Written in French,
bearing the Title of, A Catechism
of Penance, guiding Sinners to a
true Conversion. Given at Sor-
bonne the 5th. day of Decem-
ber. 1675.

PIROT.

II. Ap-

The Approbations of

II. Approbation.

I Have perus'd a small Work Entitled, A Catechisme of Penance, &c. Whereunto are annex'd divers Meditations of a Penitent Soul. It contains nothing but the Doctrine which the Church hath in all Ages professed: And if Sinners shall but follow the Way which is here taught, they will infallibly enter the Port of Eternal Felicity, having first obtain'd of God, by the Ministry of the Priest, the Remission of their sins. 'Tis the Testimony which I ow unto the Publick, and whereunto I have Subscribed. At Paris the 9th. day of December, 1675. T. Roulland.

III. Ap-

This Catechism, &c.

III. Approbation.

THe Practise of all Vertues was ordinary amongst the Primitive Christians, because they neglected not the exercise of Penance. Which the Christians of these times neglecting, they are become strangers to the Practice of all Virtues. 'Tis then to be wished, that they would resume the Spirit of the Primitive Church, so to renew in themselves the Spirit of Penance, a work of little difficulty, if they but faithfully practice the Rules which are prescrib'd in a book, the title of which is, A Catechism of Penance, &c. wherein I have found nothing which is not conformable to the Doctrine of the Church. Given at Paris the 16th day of December: 1675. Blampignon, Curate of St. Merry.

IV. Ap-

The Approbations of

IV. Approbation.

A Difficult and Unfrequent way requires a faithfull, and experienced guide: Such is the way of Penance, which Necessity engageth a sinner in, aspiring to the Grace of justification, such a guide then stands he in Need of; unto whose conduct he may with safety commit himself; and such an one will this little Treatise, entituled, A Catechism of Penance, &c. furnish him with: Seeing that but practising the Rules and Maxims it delivers, he shall but practise the Rules and Maxims of the Holy Scripture, of the Councils, and Fathers of the Church, which he shall find all speaking with the same Tongue, and
redu-

This Catechism, &c.

reduced to an Abridgment in form of Catechism; to the end, that Sinners (whose Blindness, as to the Verities of Christian Morality, exceeds the Ignorance of Children in the Mysteries of Faith) may learn these Rules and Maxims of true Penance with less pain, and more facility. Far then from having observed therein the least thing contrary to Faith or good Manners; We certify, that all it contains, conspires to nourish in the Just, and in Sinners to excite this Spirit of Penance, so necessary for a Christian; but which loseth proportionably amidst the world, its force, and decays, as the Perversity of Men gathers strength, and encreases. Given at Paris the 3^d. day of December. 1675.

G. Groin. Boscager.

Errours escaped in the Press.

Page 32. Line ult. for *sequence*, Read *con-*
sequence. p. 34. l. 23. f. *enenemy* r. *Enc-*
my. p. 172. l. 14. f. *ruduced* r. *reduced*. p. 192.
l. 8. f. *devouer* r. *devourer*. p. 195. l. 24. f. *the*
r. *thee*. p. 200. l. 1. f. *and* r. *an*.

A
CATECHISM
OF
PENANCE.

Guiding SINNERS into
the Way of a True CON-
VERSION.

I. Instruction.

SHEWING,
Wherein the Virtue of True
PENANCE Consists.

Quest. **W**hat doth this word
Penance properly sig-
nify?

Answer. It signifies a Sorrow,
and Dissatisfaction for having Lov-
ed,

ed, desir'd, said, or done any Thing contrary to the Law of God.

Q. Doth this Sorrow always flow from the Vertue of True and Christian Penance ?

A. No; for, as the Roman (a) Catechisme well observes, it often proceeds, not from the Consideration of the Offence committed against Almighty God, but from the regard we have to our own Interest; And it is then purely an Effect of Nature, and not of any Christian, and true Penance. But when we bewail our own Offences past, out of the only Motive, That a God so infinitely Holy, so infinitely Good, hath been thereby Offended, and heartily detest them on this account alone, we have ground to Believe, That our Hearts are truly touch'd, and that our Sighs, and Tears, are the real Effects thereof.

Q. What is then the Vertue of Penance ?

(a) *Cat. Rom. S. 7.*

A. It

A. It is the Guift, and peculiar Grace of God, by means whereof, the Sinner converts himself heartily unto him, hateing and detesting the Offences of his Life past, with a strong Resolution, through Divine Grace its assistance, to Sin no more; firmly hoping withal, to find Pardon, through the great Mercies of God, and Merits of his only Son Jesus Christ.

Q. *Why call you Penance the Guift of God?*

A. Because if God Almighty enlightens not from above the Understanding, and enflames not with his Divine Love the Heart, we shall never become Converted, but shall Dye undoubtedly in our Sins.

Q. *Why call we Penance a peculiar Grace?*

A. Because God Almighty grants it not, but when, and to whom it pleaseth Him. As also because the Conversion of a Sinner is a greater

Miracle than the raising of the dead.

Q. How so?

A. Although a dead Person, raised by the Power of God to Life, could not Raise himself, yet is he not unworthy of the New Life he receives; but a Sinner fallen from the Life of Grace, hath justly Merited to be for ever deprived thereof.

Q. Doth not the Vertue of Penance comprehend in it self all other Vertues?

A. It contains, in the Opinion of Saint *Thomas*, (b) in some sort, that which appertains to all other Vertues: For Penance being a kind of Reparation of Honour made by Man to God, it necessarily includes those Vertues, which have God for their Object; which are called Theological: And therefore cannot *Christian Penance* be without

(b) 3 P. q. 85. a. 3. ad 4.

Faith,

Faith, which begetteth in us a Belief in the Passion of the Son of God ; through the Merits of which, our Sins past are Pardoned, and we re-admitted into Favour : Nor can it be without a firm Hope and Confidence, that bewailing, and detesting, as we ought, our Sins, we shall obtain the Remission of them : Nor can Penance, in fine, be truly so called, unless it be accompanied with a true Hatred of Sin for God Almighty's sake, who hath been thereby Offended ; which Aversion appertains to Charity.

Q. If Penance comprehends Faith, Hope, and Charity, How can it be said to be a particular Virtue ?

A. The same Saint Thomas (c) Answers, That if we look on Penance purely as a Sorrow for sin past, It ought not then to be taken for a particular Vertue ; because this Sorrow may flow from Cha-

(c) *Loc. cit. in corp.*

rity alone. But considering it as a Sorrow for our Offences against God, in, and together with the Design we have by due Satisfaction, and the Amendment of our Lives, to Repair the same, It then manifestly appears, That Penance ought to be look'd on as a particular Vertue, and Branch of Justice. For to repair a Wrong done, Sorrow alone sufficeth not, nor a bare purpose only to Offend no more, but unto a perfect Reconciliation with the Party injured, satisfaction is no less required, which is an Act as well of Justice, as of Love.

Q. What are the Effects of true Penance ?

A. 1st. It cleanseth the Soul from the stain of sin. 2^{ly}. Satisfaction is thereby, in some sort, made to the Divine Justice offended, by Repairing the Injury done unto God by sin. 3^{ly}. It reconcileth Sinners unto God, restoring them again to his Love, and Favor.

II. In-

II. Instruction.

Of the Necessity of Penance.

Quest. **D**oth God never Pardon sin without this interiour Penance, called by St. Augustin, the Conversion of the Heart?

Ans. God Almighty, by the means of the Sacrament of Baptism, Remits, as to Infants, Original Sin, and that *Independently* of Penance, being wholly thereof, in regard of their Age, as St. Augustin Teacheth (d) incapable: But Mortal Sin, after Years of discretion, he never Pardons, where true Penance, that is to say, the Conversion of the Heart, is wanting. The same Holy Father assuring us, That God Almighty, who still Pardons the Sins of those, who truly Con-

(d) *De Cap. cont. don. l. 4. c. 24.*

vert themselves unto Him; **Ex**cludes from all hopes of like Pardon, those, who become not in like manner Converted, *Qui conversis peccata donat, non conversis non donat.* Nor is the remission of Mortal sin, in the Opinion of *St. Thomas*, (e) less than Impossible, where the Virtue of true Penance prepareth not the way.

Q. Upon what Ground doth this Doctrine rely?

A. On the Word of **JESUS CHRIST**, Verity it self; who expressly announceth unto Sinners, that *Unless they do Penance, they shall all Perish*; (f) which he twice in the same Discourse repeats, to the end to oblige them to lend an attentive Ear to so terrible a Threat, and seriously to Listen to so important a Truth, to wit, That hopes of Salvation for Sinners, without Penance, are in vain: Nor is it less

(e) Psal. 6. (f) Luc. 13.

Remark-

Remarkable, that Penance was chiefly That which Christ's Great Precursor, as also Christ himself, and his Apostles sought, by the first of all their Sermons, to excite their Followers unto. So undoubtedly did they believe *Penance* to be the main Point, on which depended the Salvation of Mankind; and that no Part was, without it, to be pretended unto, in the Merits of *Jesus Christ*, or Admittance to be purchas'd into the Inheritance of his Father's Glory.

The first Thing St. *John* Announc'd, was, *Do Penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* (g) *Yield Fruits worthy of Penance. I Baptize ye in Water unto Penance.* The like also did Christ himself, using, when He first Preach'd, these Words, (h) *Do Penance, for the Kingdom of God draws nigh.* And what else was St. *Peter's* first Ser-

(g) *Mat.* 3. 1, 2, 8, 11. (h) *Mat.* 4. v. 17;

mon, but an Exhortation unto Penance: *Do penance*, said he, (i) speaking unto those, who had address'd themselves unto him, in order to their being Inform'd, what they ought to do.

By which it plainly appears, That the Gospel of Grace is no other, properly speaking, than the *Gospel of penance*: Which made St. Paul to say, *That now it is, that God appoints the doing of Penance to be proclaim'd unto the World, without exception, either of person or place.* Act. 17. ver. 30.

Q. Did Jesus Christ then come into the World, to the end, to oblige us unto Penance?

A. Can you doubt thereof? Himself having expressly declared, (k) That the End of his coming, was to call, not the Just, but Sinners unto Penance. And was not the first thing He told His Apostles, after

(i) Act. 2. ver. 38. (k) Luke 5. ver. 31.

He

He had opened their Understandings, and Inspired them with the Knowledge of the Scriptures, That it was necessary that Christ should Suffer, ^(l) and Rise again the Third day from the Dead; and that they should Preach *Penance*, and the Remission of Sins unto all Nations in his Name. And in fine, doth not *St. Peter*, speaking of Jesus Christ, say, ^(m) That it is He, whom God hath, by his Power, as the Prince and Saviour, Exalted; to the end, to Grant unto *Israel* the *Grace of Penance*, and of the Remission of their Sins. ⁽ⁿ⁾ It is then manifest, That the Grace and Gift of *Penance*, are the proper Effect, and undoubted Fruit of the Death and Passion of the *Son of God*, and that without this Grace, we cannot hope for the Remission of our Sins.

Q. When a Sinner is truly penitent, doth he undoubtedly obtain the

^(l) Luk. 24. v. 46, 47. ^(m) Act. 3. ⁽ⁿ⁾ Act. 3.

R.

Remission of his Sins, how Enormous or great soever they be?

A. Yes, seeing that God, who cannot lye, hath by Promise obliged himself thereunto. *If the sinner, (o) saith he, shall Convert himself, and do Penance for his sins; If he shall keep my Commandements, and observe the Rules of Justice, I will forget his Iniquities, and he shall Live for ever.* God having excluded from his Mercies, the sins of none, but those who Dye impenitent therein.

Q. *Can you by any Reason Convince me of the Verity of this Promise?*

A. You are already Convinced, that no Sinner can Convert himself unto God, unless God first Convert him; and that God Converts him not, but by the means of a Powerful preventing Grace: You cannot then but know, that God Almighty, Converting a Sinner, is

(o) Ezech. 18.

already

already become, in respect of the said Sinner, Converted ; and Converting him not, but by Restoring him unto Grace ; 'tis not to be thought He will deny to a Sinner the Grace of Pardon, whom himself renders truly Penitent.

III. Instruction.

Of the Degrees of Penance.

Quest. **U**Nto what cause is the beginning of Penance to be Ascrib'd?

Ans. To the Grace of God. The Council of *Trent* declaring, that being arriv'd unto the Age of discretion, our Justification ought, as to its beginning, to be ascribed to the preventing Grace of God through *Jesus Christ*. We dispose our selves, saith the Council, unto Justification, when be-
ing

ing excited, and aided by the Divine Grace, &c. which the Roman Catechism thus explains. *The Mercy of God prevents a sinner, it changeth the heart, and inclineth it unto himself, which made the Prophet Hieremy to say, Convert us Lord unto thy self, and we will Convert our selves unto thee.*

Q. What is the first step or disposition towards Penance?

A. Faith. Arriving unto Faith by the means of hearing (continues the said Council) they are by an Act of the Will, left in its full liberty, drawn unto God, believing as most undoubtedly true, whatsoever he hath revealed, and promised: And chiefly, that the Wicked are Justified by the Grace and Mercy of God, through the Redemption, which is in Jesus Christ.

The same doth the Roman Catechisme teach, in these terms, *Being illustrated by this light, they interiorly approach unto God by Faith,*

Faith; for to approach unto God, it is in the first place, as the Apostle saith, (a) necessarily required. That we believe there is a God, and that he rewardeth those who seek him.

Q. Why is faith, and chiefly the belief of these Verities, so absolutely required to the justification of a sinner?

A. Because he, who hath not this Belief, nor this knowledg, can neither Love God, nor fear him, nor place his hope in him, as he ought; nor can he hate, and detest sin with that hearty sorrow, which Christian Penance requireth: The reason is manifest, for where the knowledg of the Majesty, and greatness of God is wanting, the malice of sin cannot be known, it not being in our Power to love, or hate what we know not: for which reason also it is, that he who hath no knowledg of the

(a) Heb. 11. 6.

Grace

Grace and Mercy of God, nor of our Redemption through Jesus Christ, cannot hope to share in the Mercies of God, nor place a confidence in the Merits of Jesus Christ; which yet, as the Council of *Trent* declares, is no less than absolutely necessary to the work of our Justification, and without which, we can neither be truly Penitent, nor merit the remission of our sins.

Q. What is the second step, or disposition unto Penance?

A. The fear of pain. (a) Knowing themselves, saith the same Council, to be Sinners, they dread the severity of God's Judgments, and reap no small fruit thereby, &c. for representing to themselves the rigour of Pains for an Eternity, (b) Fear seizeth their hearts, and diveris them from falling into sin.

Q. Why are we ordinarily lead un-
(a) *Con. trid. Ses. 6. c. 6, (b) Catech. Rom.*

*to true Penance, by the Apprehension,
and fear of Pain?*

A. As the heart pursues nothing with more eagerness than pleasure, nor flies any thing more than grief, and pain; fear, which secures it against Pleasure, the Allurement unto sin, conduceth not a little to the Bridling our proness thereunto, as also to the reclaiming us from Evil, by the consideration of the pain which attends the same. Whence it is, that fear weaning us from Evil, to the end to escape the pain awaiting thereon, it disposeth us, by a more Generous, more Heroick, and more Christian Sentiment to the Love of Good, and consequently to the detestation and flight of Evil.

Q. Why is not the fear alone of Pain sufficient unto true Penance?

A. First, Because this fear alone Converts not at all the heart; nor doth he, who refrains from Sin,
on

on no other motive than the fear of Pain, cast off the will, or affection he hath to sin; nor would he scruple in the least, the committing thereof, could he exempt himself from the Pain due unto it. Secondly, Because a true Reconciliation with God consists not with a meer servil fear. Thirdly, Because he, who detests not Sin, but on the account of his own Interest, regards more the damage he fears, than the wrong he doth; and so resents more his own loss, than the Sin he commits; and shuns rather the pain, which would be Just, than his own Crimes which cannot be but unjust; which clearly denotes the irregularity of such a fear. Fourthly, Because neither God, or our own Reconciliation with him, are otherwise thereby sought, then purely in order to our selves; which is to render God subservient to our Iniquities

quities, and make our selves the end of him, who ought to be the only end, as he is the beginning, of all. A disorder as in no other Vertue, so consequently not in that of true Penance, to be met withal.

Q. What is the third step unto Penance ?

A. The hope we have of the remission of our sins. It is the Doctrine of the Council of Trent, which teacheth, *That the Sinner, considering the abundant Mercies of God, changeth the fear he had, into hope ; confiding to meet with Pardon, on the Account of the Merits of Jesus Christ.* The Roman Catechisme also saith, *That it is this hope of Pardon which invitetb a Sinner firmly to resolve on the Amendment of his Life.*

Q. What is the fourth and last step, or disposition unto Penance ?

A. The Love of God, whom the Sinner now begins to Love, as the true

true Source of all Vertue, and Justice ; and this Love is it which excites in him an Hatred, and Aversion unto sin, wherein true Penance consists. *Love in fine*, saith the Roman Catechisme, *warming our hearts, engendreth that Filial Fear, by which true Children are discerned, and works, with all this good effect, that fearing even in the least to offend God, we come to shake intirely off the habit of Sin: Behold the degrees by which we arrive unto Penance. A Vertue wholly Heavenly, wholly Divine, and unto which a promise of Heaven, as the Holy Scripture assures us, is annex'd.*

Q. Can it by any passage of Scripture be prov'd, that we cannot without the love of God, rise from sin, or merit the remission thereof : And that no Penance where this Love is wanting, can be true, or at all available to a Reconciliation with almighty God?

A. The

A. The beloved Disciple tells us, (a) *That he who loves not, remains in Death.* And the Apostle no less assures us, (b) *That in Vain, where Love is defective, are other Vertues practis'd.* When with my whole substance, saith he, I shall have reliev'd the Poor, and even deliver'd up my Body to be burnt, what Advantage, if Charity alone be wanting, shall I reap thereby. For Anathematiz'd be he, and accurs'd, who loves not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, how laudable soever his other Actions appear.

Little conduceable then to our Justification in the Sight of God, is that Penance, should it even incline us to suffer Martyrdom it self, where that Love, that Charity is not found, which Converts the Heart, by transferring our affections from Creatures to God alone.

(a) Jo. 3. 14. (b) 1 Cor. 13.

IV. Instruction.

That the Vertue of Penance exceeds the force of Nature.

Quest. **C**annot we of our selves conceive that sorrow and detestation of sin, which shall suffice to regain the Favour and Friendship of God?

Ans^w. We may well for some Natural, or humane respect, become sensible of our own defaults; but as such a resentment cannot take its rise but from our selves, so can it aim at no other end, than our selves; it being wholly inefficacious towards the working our Attonement with God, unto whom we can never return but by himself; nor love him, unless he give a beginning thereunto, who ought also to be the sole end thereof.

Q. True

Q. True Penance cannot then be procured without the peculiar Assistance of Divine Grace?

A. No, As hath been already said in the first Instruction.

Q. But can we not of our selves contribute at least to the beginning thereof, and dispose our selves, in Vertue of our own force, thereunto?

A. Not at all, seeing we cannot of our selves, as St. Paul teacheth, (a) form any one good thought, it being to God alone we owe our whole sufficiency in that kind: Far are we then from arriving, through any force, or sufficiency of our own, to those High and Eminent Vertues, which must Convert the heart, and Reconcile us again to God. A Verity the Prophet was not ignorant of, when he said unto God, (b) Having been by thee Converted, Lord, I did Penance, and having been by thee enlightn'd, I smote my

(a) 2 Cor. 3. (b) Hier. 31. 19.

thigh,

thigh; observing the disorders of my own heart.

Q. True Penance is then the Gift of God, a Grace supernatural, and surpassing the Power of a Creature left unto himself?

A. It is not only a supernatural Gift, but, according to S. Thomas, the greatest in some sort, the most admirable, the most excellent of all the Works of God. St. Augustine no less affirms, that the Justification of a sinner, which is wrought by the means of Penance, is a greater Work than the Creation of Heaven and Earth.

Q. Declare how the Justification of a sinner argues a greater Power, than the Creation of Heaven and Earth, yea then of Angels, and Man in the state of Grace?

A. In the Creation of Heaven and Earth, of Angels, and Men, God made use but of a Word alone; but to the Justification of a sinner, 'twas necessary that the
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Son of God should become Man, and die, to the end to make satisfaction for the sins of Men, which he had Charg'd himself with.

Q. The Fruit of the Death and Passion of the Son of God, the promises of the Old Testament, and Graces of the New, do they all chiefly consist in the Gift of Penance, and Justification of a sinner?

A. St. Paul saith, That Jesus Christ delivered himself up for us, to the end to Redeem us from our Iniquities, and to Purifie us, that he might render us a People peculiarly consecrated to his service. (a) And the Prophet Ezechiel lays before us the Promises of God in these words, (b) I will give unto you a new Heart, and I will send a new Spirit into the midst of you, and I will take from you your stony Hearts, and I will give unto you Hearts of Flesh, and will cause you to walk in the way of my Commandements, and to

(a) Tit. 2. 24. (b) Ezech. 36. 26, 27.

C

observe

observe my Laws, and to fulfil them.
 Now this change of an obdurate heart into a new one, and the gift of a new Spirit, imports nothing else than the Grace of Penance, and Justification of a sinner.

Q. Can any one claim at the hand of God, as due, this Grace of Penance?

A. No, For man being become guilty of sin, is not only fallen into an Incapacity of meriting this Grace, but his Offences, together, with the Corruptions of his Heart, justly deserve that God should forever withdraw his Mercies from him. So that if God at any time deny him this Grace, he justly does it, and granting it, he does but what his meer Mercies move him unto. In fine, it would cease to be Grace, should it be due to any merits of ours: which plainly condemns the presumption of those, who, that they may with more freedom sin, flatter themselves with the thought

of doing Penance hereafter ; as if this Grace were due unto them, and they fully assured thereof.

Q. Doth not God grant unto all Sinners the Grace of doing Penance ?

A. It is certain that he refuseth it, through the judgment of his Justice, unto many ; for many, as we see, die in their sins ; some surprised by death in the Actual committing of them ; God not granting them time, or opportunity to do Penance ; others meet indeed with both ; but such is their Blindness, such their Hardness of heart, the just punishment of sin, that, Abandon'd to a kind of Insensibility, they look on Penance with an eye even of aversion, or at least, through too dangerous, too treacherous a Confidence, defer it to the last ; insomuch that a great number either do no penance at all, or but in appearance only : Like unto King *Antiochus*, who burdensom to him-

self, and touch'd with a greater sense of his own Miseries, then his Crimes, (a) could not obtain of God that Mercy, which in appearance he seemed so instantly to demand.

Q. Is it certain that God doth many times punish Sinners with this blindness, and obduratness of heart?

A. There can no doubt be made thereof, it having been by a Prophet, and an Evangelist so manifestly attested: St. John (b) speaking of the Jewes, Assures us, they could not believe, because *Isaias* had said of them (c) that God had *Blinded their Eyes, and hardned their hearts, lest seeing with their Eyes, and comprehending with their hearts, they should become converted, and be inclined to heal them.* It would be easy to alledg many other passages of Scripture, Importing, that God

(a) 2 Mac. 9. (b) Jo. 12. (c) Isa. 6. 9, 10.

Almighty

Almighty Abandons sometimes sinners so far, that they shall never become Converted, nor receive the least Impression from all the Sermons they hear, all the Exhortations which are made unto them, all the Instructions which are given them; nor yet from all the Miracles the Hand of God himself shall work amongst them; Resembling herein the *Jewes*, whom neither the Exhortations, nor Instructions of the Son of God, nor Miracles, though wrought by him in their presence, could convert.

Q. Is God then the cause of this Obdurateness?

A. No, The cause thereof are our own sins; which causing us to abandon God, they oblige him to abandon us unto the darkness, and desires of our own hearts, by denying us the Grace necessary for the recovery of our selves from so deplorable a state, from whence it

proceeds that the corruption of Nature gets the upper hand, and renders it self Master both of the Heart and Will.

Q. Who are those, that chiefly deserve to be thus abandoned to this blindness mentioned, and obdurateness of heart?

A. Those first who reject the call of God, justly merit, that he should no more speak unto their hearts, but abandon them to the prudence of their own Flesh.

2dly. Those who rashly, & through presumption, believe that their Conversion depends not but on their own will, on which alone it no less depends to do Penance when they please. Those I say justly deserve to be by God abandon'd to their own weakness, and left unto themselves, to the end they may have no ground to glorify themselves, nor cause to impute their Salvation to any Power or Vertue of their own.

3. The

3dly. The Grace of a true Conversion is justly denyed unto those, who look on it as a thing due; and perswade themselves, that, should God refuse it, he could not without injustice punish them; whose pride to confound, God delights to manifest the Rigour of his Justice, by denying them the succour of his Mercies.

4ly. God yet denies the Grace of Conversion unto those, who vainly perswade themselves, they shall without difficulty, without labour, or pain, obtain it, and set so low a value thereon, that far from humbling themselves, far from mourning, far from applying themselves as they ought, to prayer, in order to the meriting thereof, they please themselves, yea glory in their Crimes; At least, but coldly demand so great a grace, dreading Afflictions, dreading sufferance, dreading the very thought of violence

lence towards themselves ; As if so Important a Blessing deserv'd not to be purchased at any rate, yea with the whole ardour of their Souls. 'Tis what God himself desires to render us sensible of; when in the same place, where he assures us, that those, who seek him, shall find him ; He adds this condition withall, provided, that we seek him with all our heart, and in perfect sorrow of soul ; which also JESUS CHRIST farther yet confirmes by these words full of terrour ; (a) *Strive to enter by the Narrow gate, for I affirm unto you, that many shall seek to enter thereat, but shall not obtain it, because tis without pain, without difficulty, without dispensing with pleasure or ease, they seek to enter.*

Q. Are then the loss of Grace, and state of mortal sin of so dangerous a sequence ?

(a) Luc. 13.

A. Yes

A. Yes, more dangerous than can be expressed ; it being first wholly impossible for a sinner to recover the grace he hath once lost, or quit the unhappy state sin hath cast him into, without recourse had unto true Penance. 2. Because this grace is the pure Gift of God alone, which he is in no wise oblig'd to grant. 3. God justly refusing it to so great a number of sinners, what can be more doubtful, then whether such an one shall ever obtain it.

Q. What ought a Sinner then, Abandoned to so deplorable a state, to do ?

A. He ought first, carefully to refrain from whatsoever shall farther increase the Wrath of God against him. Secondly to hear with all due attention his Word ; and embrace the inspirations he shall give him : Thirdly, to put faithfully in practice the good Motions he shall visit him withal. Fourthly,
to

to acknowledg his own frailty, as also his own unworthiness to receive so great a Grace. Let him, Fifthly, with a due sense bewail the loss of the Love and Favour of so great, and good a God; sparing neither Tears, nor Prayers, nor Fasts, nor Almsdeeds, nor other Penal Works, how difficult soever, which may conduce to the recovery of so Inestimable a Treasure.

Q. Shall a sinner, perseverantly complying herewith, assuredly obtain the Grace of Penance, and of a true Conversion?

A. Yes, he shall certainly obtain it; It is Christ himself, who gives us this Assurance, saying, Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the Gate shall be open'd unto you: Insomuch, that let but a Sinner persevere to Knock, should God, as to an Enemy, deny him entrance, being not as yet restored unto his Favour,

yet

yet will his importunity force it from him ; that is to say, his humble and instant Perseverance shall not fail to wrest from God Almighty the grant of his request.

V. Instruction.

Concerning the Illusion of those, who think themselves in the State of Grace, when they are indeed in the State of Mortal Sin.

Quest. **D**O not many believe themselves to be in the state of Grace, who yet really are in the state of Mortal Sin ?

A. There are but too many who resemble the *Pharisees*, of whom Christ said, That they had their Confidence placed in themselves, reckoning

reckoning themselves amongst the Just; this proud sort of People, full of themselves, think themselves full of good Works, and arrived to an higher degree of Sanctity, than the rest of Men; whose Lives they look not on, but with an Eye of Indignation and Contempt, Which secret Pride of theirs, evidenceth their Vertues to be but Hypocrisy; and the Sanctity they boast of, but Injustice and Impiety. Which caus'd the Son of God to Thunder forth against them the most formidable of Maledictions, to wit, that they should Dye in their Sins. They ought not to expect from God a milder Reproach, than the Bishop of *Laodicea* justly incur'd; recorded by *St. John* in these Words; (a) *Thou sayst that thou art rich, that thy Wealth abounds, and stand'st in need of nothing; and know'st not how*

(a) *Apo. 3.*

Poor,

Poor, how Miserable, how Naked, how Blind thou art. So Blind indeed was this unhappy Bishop, in the concern of his own spiritual Welfare, so much a stranger to the state of his own Soul.

Others there are, who, actually being in the state of Mortal Sin, think not at all thereof, nor indeed believe it. And these, more nicely deluded, perswade themselves, that not to lose the Grace and Favour of Almighty God, it sufficeth so to demean themselves, that their Actions prove not highly Criminal. And indeed enquiring into the manner of their whole procedure, it would argue too great a severity to fasten on the worst of their Actions, the censure of Mortal Sin. If quitting their Beds, they neglect to offer up themselves to God, what is it but a Venial Omission. If the Morning pass away in the dispatch of Affairs, in

D — Coyse-

Poor,

Coyfeing, Dressing, and Adjusting themselves; there is more of the unprofitable, more of small vanity therein, than crime: From thence to *Mas*s, where, if perfect Attention be wanting, it ought rather to be imputed to Negligence, than any hainous Contempt: Then to the Table, where the variety of choice Dishes serves rather to prevent offence unto the Pallat, than to administer matter of Pleasure: And, What great Crime would the Pleasure usually taken therein, amount unto? Next, Visits to be made or received, are resolved upon. The rest of the day is allotted to Conversation, which is sometimes serious, sometimes pleasant, and sometimes matter of complement helps out Discourse; but yet due Measures are still observed. The Serious part is not fallen upon, but to the end, not to fail in matter of Respect; and Mirth is but a pretty

pretty pleasing kind of humour, proper to sweeten Conversation: and if a peice of Gallantry chance to be started, whilst without heat of Passion, 'tis conceived to be without Offence; nor will Passion need any great excuse, provided it mount not to excess. Trifles often in Company piece out, 'tis true, Discourse. where also the Humours of others, especially those, of whom we are apt to entertain a less favourable Opinion, are many times decry'd; in all which, What enormous Crime appears? And if some Game be perhaps proposed, 'Tis rather, say they, on the account of Divertisement, than Interest; nor can they conclude any great harm therein. Supper, in fine, ensues; which ended, in like manner, as in the Morning they forsook their Beds, retireing, they betake themselves to Rest: In all which, What can justly be

deem'd a Crime? 'Tis a course of
 Life suitable enough, I confess, to
 the suggestions of Nature. But
 doth the love of our own Ease,
 doth the love of innocent Diver-
 tisements argue us Guilty of any
 Great Offence? And so judging
 of these Persons, by what doth in
 their daily Comportment appear,
 to condemn them to a state of Mor-
 tal Sin, would be too severe. But
 Searching into the bottom, and
 sifting the Affections of the Heart;
 the true Measure of our Innocency
 or Guilt in the sight of God;
 what shall we discover, but a Peo-
 ple full of the Love of themselves,
 and consequently destitute of the
 Love of God? What, but a Peo-
 ple, held, by the Maxims of the
 world, fast Link'd unto the world,
 and loving what the world Loves,
 how contrary soever to the Maxims
 of Christianity, how repugnant
 soever to the Prescripts of *Jesus*
Christ?

Christ ? What shall we meet withal, but a People wholly sway'd by Pleasure, by Vanity, wholly interessed in temporal Concerns, wholly disinteressed in the weightier Concerns of their own Souls ?

Now who see's not that such a State, being assuredly no state of Life and Grace, can be no other than a state of Sin and Death ; For if to love the world, be, as the Apostle teacheth, *To become an Enemy unto God* : (a) And that *the Soul which lives in delights, be already dead* : (b) Is he not then Dead ? Is he not an Enemy unto God ? that is to say, Cast out of the Favour of God, and deprived by Mortal Sin of Life, the Life of Grace, who Lives not but to the World, nor enjoys himself, but in the enjoyment thereof ?

Let us no longer then deceive our selves, out of an erroneous

(a) *Jac.* 4. 4. (b) *1 Tim.* 6.

Perswasion, that refraining such
 Actions as involve mortal Sin, we
 are safe enough, and secure from
 danger of Damnation : No, it suf-
 ficeth to render us lyable thereun-
 to, not to Love God more than
 the World, or than our Selves,
 and to defer more to pleasure,
 to vanity, to self-interest, or the
 like, than to the Love of God,
 the Good of our Neighbour, or
 the Wellfare of our own Souls.
 Others there are, besides those
 mentioned, who having but Con-
 fessed their Sins, fancy themselves
 instantly received into Favour, in-
 stantly re-established in the State of
 Grace ; little Sollicitous, whether
 their Confessions were with Sor-
 row duely accompanied, or wrong,
 to the Divine Justice done, be by
 Satisfaction duely repair'd. As
 if the bare Confession of their Sins,
 with how little remorse soever,
 were all, wherein the Vertue of
 true

true Penance did consist. An important Point, wherein too many too often abuse themselves ; as the following *Instruction* shall make appear.

VI. *Instruction.*

Of the Illusion of those, who believe that they have True Contrition, and yet are found to be without it.

Quest. **A** *Re Sinners at any time deceiv'd in the point of Sorrow for their Sins ?*

A. Yes, for they sometimes take the Sorrow they feel, for true Contrition, which yet proves wholly defective as to that, wherein true Contrition chiefly consists: They think it sufficient thereunto, to acknowledge their Fault, and Confessing it, to demand Pardon for

the same; but observe not, that, Where the Heart is not truly chang'd, their pretended Sorrow falls short of true Contrition, and little avails them to the Remission of their Sins. Which the Example of King *Antiochus* makes evidently appear: He acknowledg'd his Transgressions; he with Tears made shew of more than ordinary Sorrow; he vow'd Restitution of whatsoever he was unjustly Possess'd of; he oblig'd himself to set the People of *Hierusalem*, which he had held Captive, at Liberty; to make Rich Presents to the Temple, to defray at his own Charge, all the Victims, which should be there offered up to the True God in Sacrifice; and to Announce the Greatness of his Majesty and Glory to all the World. Such Promises, such Protestations did that King make in the Sight and Presence of God, whose Eye, he

he well knew, penetrated the bottom of his Heart, and discovered the most Secret of all his Thoughts; whom therefore he could not pretend to deceive; and as little did it avail him to Dissemble: And yet was this Contrition of his, how Goodly soever in appearance, rejected; nor obtained he the Pardon, which he so instantly demanded.

Q. Do Sinners often deceive thus themselves in the discernment of true and false Contrition?

A. But too often, as well appears by what the Fathers of the Church have left Written on that Subject; As also by the Rules, the Holy Councils have prescrib'd, for preventing the Abuses, which frequently arise from the plausible Appearance, which false and deceitful Penance carries with it.

Q. Is there any danger of Deceit in this kind, in the present Age we live in?

D 5

A. Ne-

A. Never more; The Love of God, as the *Roman Catechism* observes, being at present grown in the Hearts of Christians so cold, that many require not at all to the Remission of Sin, that the Penitent, with his whole Heart, bewail his Offences past, or that he be sensibly and interiorly touch'd; but that any Sorrow, though feign'd, and only in appearance, doth suffice.

Others admit indeed unto the Remission of Sin, a necessity of our being truly Touch'd, and as truly concern'd for haveing committed it; but hold withal that the sole Dissatisfaction, the sole Displeasure we have for haveing Offended God, is all-sufficient to a true Reconciliation, and perfect Attonement with him.

An Errour amongst Christians, but too frequent, who believe themselves in the Court of Heaven Absolv'd,

solv'd, if they but Confess their
 Sins with any little Remorse, for
 haveing fallen into them, though
 with as little purpose of Amend-
 ment, and as small Resolution of
 avoiding, for the Future, the oc-
 casions of Sin, or Will to apply a
 Remedy: Without which, never-
 theless their Penance, their Con-
 trition, is as Fruitless, as their
 pretentions to a Reconciliation
 with God are vain. True then,
 and but too true it is, That the
 Contrition of many little or no-
 thing avails to the Remission of
 their Sins; as by this reason is
 clearly Evinc'd. Never were more
 Confessions, never fewer Conver-
 sions seen: From whence it can-
 not but follow, That Penance was
 never more abused; seeing that Pe-
 nance cannot, without a true Con-
 version, be true. Do we not see
 the Life of the greatest part of
 Christians, to be but a kind of
 Medly

Medly made up of Sins and Confessions, of Confessions and Sins : And that they present themselves before the Tribunals of the Church, unresolved to quit their ill Habits, unresolved to abandon the occasions of Sin, unresolved to encounter their own Passions, and as little disposed to Apply a Remedy to the Evils they seem to deplore. Are they not daily seen, notwithstanding the Sorrow they pretend in Confession to express, to retire from the Sacrament of Penance, as full of Love unto the World, as full of Love unto themselves, as much devoted to Vanity, to Pleasure, to Interest, as before.

Oh how frequent, how great is the Abuse of Penance ! how few true Penitents ! were such Confessions Good, could such Penitents be Saved, it could not be true, that a bad Life is ordinarily attended by as bad a Death : Nor
could

could it be but false, though Attested by Verity it self, that the Way to Heaven is narrow, and strait the Gate which enters into Life; and that none enter thereat without Pain, Difficulty, and Sweat; yea, without Violence offered to themselves. We should rather conclude, That the Way were easy, and large the Gate, seeing that Men, without an Adoe to Pleasure, to Vanity, to Interest; without Conquering their own Passions, without laying Hands upon themselves, entred with so much Ease: And that, but confessing their own Frailty, with any little Sorrow, any small resentment of their Crimes, how great soever, the Benefit of Absolution were without more adoe obtain'd.

VII. Instruction.

From whence it proceeds, That Sinners so often deceive themselves in the Point of True Contrition.

Quest. **H**OW can it be, That a Sinner should judge the Sorrow he hath for his Sins to be true Contrition, it not being truly so?

Ans. This first happens through Ignorance, whilst wanting due Instruction, he knows not that wherein true Contrition consists, nor the chief Vertues required thereunto; and without which a Reconciliation with Almighty God, cannot, by means thereof, be wrought; such as are Faith, Hope, and Charity; as also through want of Ability to discern between true and false Contrition. Se-

Secondly, This proceeds from the Love of our selves, which often deceives us, making us believe, that we Love that which in effect we do not Love; and that we no longer Love that, which yet we still Love. If any spark of Devotion but warm our Hearts, or that we experience the least Aversion unto Sin, we are apt to flatter, Immediately our selves with the conceit of our Loving God above all; and Hateing above all, whatsoever we know to be displeasing unto him. As if any slight Impression were of force enough to change the Heart.

Thirdly, We deceive our selves, by taking what but barely occurs unto the Mind, for real Motions of the Heart; as also what but meerly Presents it self, for fixed Designs. And hence it proceeds, That many fancy themselves already Transported with the true Love

Love of God, as soon as they shall but have said, *My God, I Love thee*; and that all the thoughts they have of a Change of Life, are as many positive Resolutions, and true Conversions of the Heart; so little are we vers'd in the true Knowledge of our selves.

(a) St. Gregory excellently describes this Illusion, *We are often deluded into a strong perswasion, saith this Holy Doctor, that we Love some good Action, which yet indeed we love not at all, or that we love not the glory and vanities of the World, which yet in effect, we Love to that degree, that we even make them the Idols of our Heart.*

Q. *Is it then true, that many deceive themselves in the Knowledge of their own Contrition?*

A. Yes, for we see many, who think themselves truly Contrite, provided they but with Attention

(a) *Past. i. p. c. 9.*

recite some certain Prayer, where-
 in they find expressed, That they
 are Sorry for their Sins, that they
 heartily detest them, and are ra-
 ther resolved to Dye, than Sin a-
 gain. These Persons perceive not,
 that it is their Thoughts only
 which speak, and not the Heart;
 and that to Think, and Say, are
 far different from, to Love, and
 Will. The Heart holds not
 alwayes Intelligence with our
 Thoughts; and it often falls out,
 that the Heart is not at all, or
 at most, but faintly Touch'd, what
 e're our Thoughts be, or what
 Prayer soever we recite, and that
 with the greatest Attention ima-
 ginable. To think then, or by
 words to affirm, That we are
 heartily Contrite, is not to have
 true and hearty Contrition indeed:
 Nor are they wanting, who read,
 and recite with strong Application
 of Mind; the most select Senti-
 ments

ments of Penance, and Acts, the most perfect that can be, of Contrition, wherewith Books plentifully furnish them, without having the Heart at all touch'd, at least not touch'd to a Conversion. In which kind it is, That many abuse themselves, believing themselves to have form'd a vigorous Act of Contrition, because they have, with Attention of Mind, recited those high Protestations of hateing, flying, and detesting Sin. Let them then disabuse themselves, and know, that true Contrition ought to be lodg'd, not in thoughts, or words, but in the Heart.

Q. But yet at least, when we find our selves so sensibly touch'd, that it draws even Sighs from the Heart, and Tears from the Eyes, ought then our Contrition to be look'd on, as True and Sincere?

A. We may be yet deceiv'd therein; for those Sighs and Tears may

may well proceed from a tenderness of Nature, and Sense we have of the Shame, which accompanies Sin, or Pains wherewith it is threatened.

Q. Do you pretend that it is Fruitless to recite such Prayers, as those before-mentioned?

A. Contrarywise, I highly approve thereof; but affirm it an Errour to believe, That the Grace of Penance is, as it were, thereunto annexed; or that we, when we but read, or with Attention recite such Prayers, must needs then instantly obtain it: Let them in God's Name, then recite them, but let the Heart withal rather speak, than the Tongue or Mind.

Q. Discover yet those other Illusions, which we are subject unto in matter of Contrition?

A. How Intense soever our Sorrow be, the fear of Pain works many times more strongly on us, than

than the Love of Justice; and the loss of the repose of Conscience, of temporal Fortunes, of Health, Honour, and the like, makes a deeper Impression than the Offence, though against God himself; which argues but a pure effect of Nature; and therefore taking it for true Contrition, we but deceive our selves. Many, in fine, there are, who as soon as they but experience the least Dissatisfaction for haveing Sinned against God, and but faintly desire to return unto him, fancy themselves already Converted, already truly Contrite; but those are ordinarily but imperfect Acts of the Will, and but weak Desires; too weak, whilst an attachment yet unto Sin remains, to change the Heart; too weak, to purchase a Reconciliation with Almighty God. So great an abuse is it, to think, That all Sorrow for Sin, ought instantly
to

to be admitted for true Contrition.

Q. May not one, at the very moment of his committing Sin, be truly sorry for his committing it?

A. Those who rather sin through fear, or for compliance sake, than an inclination thereunto, would willingly not sin, and are not a little concern'd to see themselves, out of Human respects, drawn to do that, which wounds their Conscience.

Q. Doth not that very Reluctance excuse them; and may they not be properly said to be truly Penitent?

A. Not at all; seeing it diverts them not from doing that which is by God forbidden.

Q. How can that be?

A. When but one good is alone proposed unto the Will, it meets with no demur in the pursute thereof, nothing ballancing the natural Inclination the will hath thereunto:

But

But finding it self engaged between two Evils, or two Goods, neither its Love, or Aversion, run so smoothly on: For preferring the good it most loves, or flying the evil it most dreads, it loseth not nevertheless the Inclination it hath for the other; and though it embrace the one, 'tis not yet without a secret dissatisfaction, to find it self debarr'd from the Enjoyment of both.

'Twas *Pilates* case, who would willingly not have Committed an act of Injustice by condemning *JESUS CHRIST*, whose Innocency he doubted not of; but the fear of *Cesar's* displeasure was more prevalent with him, than the Love of Justice. Nor did *Herod* without a reluctance, pronounce sentence against *St. John* of Death, yet rather chose to dispence with Conscience, then not to comply with a darling Harlot's bloody

bloody request. And 'tis but what daily palleth in the Hearts of Sinners ; who having not for the most part, wholly cast off the Love of good, being by their own inclinations lead thereunto ; nor wholly being without some aversion from evil, are yet drawn, by the apprehension of some evil more nearly threatning them, or love of some apparent good, more powerfully alluring them, to engage themselves in crimes, as acts of Injustice, or the like, which willingly they would not commit ; and yet committing them not, but because they will ; seeing that if they had not a will thereunto, they would not so absolutely commit them ; this dislike they have of the ill they actually do, excuseth them not, nor ought to be looked on as an Act of true sorrow, such as Christian Penance necessarily requires.

Q. What

Q. What is yet farther required unto true Penance ?

A. Our Sorrow, and Contrition ought to be so Vigorous, that neither Fear, Favour, nor compliance ever prevail so far with us, as to induce us to do that which the Duty we owe unto God, forbids; but that we be disposed to all lose, all suffer, rather than mortally to offend him.

Q. Sorrow then alone for our sins past; as to have been, for Example, engag'd in Duel, is not sufficient for the obtaining of Pardon for the same ?

*A. No ; For this Sorrow takes away neither the Affection nor the Will, we have to Sin, something more is then required to true Contrition ; to wit, a will firmly resolv'd to lose the vain esteem, the favour and friendship of men, with what else so ever ; yea even Life it self, rather than do that
which*

which the Law of God forbids : as to Fight, for example in Duel ; or but to yeild our consent unto an action, which implyeth sin, from whence we cannot but conclude, that many in point of true contrition deceive themselves ; which ought not to be reputed such, if besides the sorrow they have, they put not also on a stedfast Resolution, befall what can, to sin no more.

Q. Are not even such Resolutions sometimes subject to deceit ?

A. Desires are often mistaken for Resolutions, and the ordinary language of Sinners is, that from their hearts they wish, that they may never become guilty again of such an Offence ; and that their endeavours shall be to prevent occasions of new relapses thereinto. A mark of the Will's not being as yet strong enough, nor heart as yet converted : But few are found,

E

who

who protest that they will absolutely relinquish all occasions, yea, break off all engagements unto sin; and that rather then again to offend God, they shall not value what dangers, what extremities they expose themselves unto.

Not to be then deceived therein, one may Judge of the Firmness and Sincerity of such Resolutions, by the Fidelity they shew in the observance of them. For to yeild to the first temptation, argues them to have been at first but faintly made: And to return to their former disorders, gives but too much ground to suspect, they had but laid them for a time by, the Heart still remaining as unconverted as before.

It often again falls out, that one finds himself very sensibly concerned for many, or perhaps most of those sins, whereof his Conscience accuseth him; and is withal firmly resolved to fall no more back
for

for the future into them; But yet there remains a criminal attachment of the Heart to some one or more sinful Objects; being either over-masted therein by too strong a passion, or else deluded into as strong a persuasion, that this inclination of his is not so highly blameable. For we presume, in the Age we live in, to palliate, yea even to Justifie the greatest part of abuses, under a pretext of custom, of a present mode, or opinion of the World; A pretext, as indeed without all colour of-excuse, so too weak to secure us from damnation.

Looking then into the heart of Penitents, how few truly Contrite, how few truly Penitent, shall we find? How few not deceivers, or not deceived? Not the least sorrow, the least remorse accompanying the Confessions they make; or if any perhaps do, 'tis but what

the tenderness of Nature, or some merely human Consideration excites. So far is it from any conversion of the Heart, so far from any disengagement of our Affections unto sin,

VIII. Instruction.

That it greatly Imports a Sinner seriously to examin, whether the Sorrow he hath amounts to true Contrition.

Quest. **C** An you shew by any passage of the Holy Scriptures, that he who desires to live according to the Spirit of the Gospel, ought diligently to inquire into the interiour disposition of his own soul?

A. If you but peruse the 14th. Chapter of St. Luke, you shall find that a great number resorting unto

to Jesus Christ, he said unto them; If any one comes unto me, and hates not his Father and Mother, his Wife and Children, his Brothers and Sisters, yea even his own life, he can be no Disciple of mine. For which of you designing to build a Tower, calculateth not first at leasure, the expence that shall be requisite thereunto, that so he may be the better assured of his being furnished with means to finish the same; lest having laid the Foundation, he fail of bringing it to perfection, and so expose himself to the laughter of those who shall behold his undertakings at a stand? So, whosoever amongst you Renounceth not all he hath, cannot be my Disciple.

Q. What mean you by this Tower? And what is signified by the expence, so necessary to the perfecting thereof?

A. By the Tower, is understood Evangelical Perfection ; whereunto all Christians are obliged to put an hand ; and by the Expence, that we ought to spare nothing in order to the raising of this Building, and purchase of this perfection.

Q. *What doth Christ then pretend to teach by this Parable ?*

A. He maketh use of this Comparison, the better to give us to understand, that to be Disciples of his, that is, truly to deserve the name of Christians ; 'tis not enough to follow him in exterior appearance only ; as to be present at Sermons, to frequent the company of persons, even the most Religious ; to receive with diligence the Sacraments, and the like : But that 'tis in the Interior Disposition the main doth chiefly consist : And that the Inclination we have for the best of Friends, for the nearest

neerest and dearest of Allyes, for the goods of Fortune, or of what nature else soever, ought to be managed with so entire a submission to the Will of *Jesus Christ*, and to the Spirit of his Grace; that we be still disposed to Relinquish all, rather than to do, or to consent to any thing, which may endanger the loss of Gods Grace. He farther yet teaches us by this Parable, that all who will be his, and make profession to follow him, ought seriously to enquire, how they stand in this kind disposed; to the end they leave not the Work, which Grace hath begun, Imperfect; and so expose themselves to the derision of the Devil.

Q. This Parable seems only to relate unto those, to whom the embracing of the Christian Faith is proposed: Why apply you it then unto such, as have already embraced it,
but

but yet forbear not to fall, after profession made thereof?

A. He, who by mortal sin hath once betrayed & lost his Baptismal Grace, ought not to be look'd on so much a Disciple of Jesus Christ, as a Perfidious and Perjur'd person, guilty of the breach of Promise, the most Solemn, the most Sacred that can be made; whose Conversion ought therefore to be narrowly enquired into, without giving too easie credit to what he saith. It is then but reasonable and just, that we attentively consider, and with due deliberation examine, whether the heart be entirely disengag'd, and we firmly resolved to forsake all, to do all, and suffer all, rather than to commit a mortal sin.

Q. *Are we obliged to enquire into the sufficiency of our own strength, in order to the surmounting all the temptations we may at any time encounter withal?*

A. No,

A. No, for we put not always in execution the good, which we but faintly design, nor is it force or power on our part, which justifieth us before *God*, but a good and resolute Will. Whereof *St. Peter* hath left us a remarkable example; none can doubt but he was Just, when he expressed a readiness to give up his Life, for his Master Christ; and yet this good Will of his was not strong enough to surmount the fear of Death; and he taught us by his fall, that to do that which is good, 'tis requisite, that we have a stedfast and firm Will to accomplish it.

Q. Is it expedient for a Penitent to make tryal of himself, and to examine whether he should have courage enough to suffer all Etremities, yea the torments of *Martyrdom* it self, rather than to commit a mortal sin?

A. It is not only expedient, but
a

a part of Christian Duty to foresee the occasions which his condition or inclination may engage him in ; As to accept, for example, a Challenge given, to the end to demand the assistance of a more Powerful Grace, and arm himself with stronger resolutions : But this experiment of our selves, in relation to contingencies, which are not ordinary, is in no wise advisable ; yea the consequence, especially when meeting with a quick and sprightly imagination, may be dangerous ; for it would often happen, that they would find themselves so surprized, so moved, and so startled at the only prospect of that which their own fancy had created, that finding all Resistance too weak, the Will it self would relent, and yield unto the Temptation they had unadvisedly cast themselves into.

Q. Are those out of danger in this

this kind, who have not the Imagination so quick?

A. Those, whom nothing is apt to move, and whose Imagination leaves no Impression on the Heart, will easily perswade themselves, that such an Insensibility cannot but flow from the height of Virtue: And so will Pride easily incline them to believe themselves both able and ready to embrace the worst of Sufferance, when the Cause of *Jesus Christ* shall require it: As if Fire and Sword would not more powerfully work upon them, than the *Idea* which themselves had framed: And as if Sufferance in colours only, the product of their own Imagination, would make as sensible an Impression, as real Torments indeed.

It cannot then but carry Danger with it; so to take an account of our own Strength, so to make Trial of our selves, in case of future

ture Contingencies of such a Nature; an Insensibility whereof, would but nourish Pride; and too great a Sense, but stagger our firmest Resolutions. It sufficeth to be ready armed against present Occasions, or such as we meet but too frequently withal.

Q. What ought to be done when such thoughts occur; As for example, Whether we should remain so firm in the Profession of our Faith, as to endure with St. Laurence, the Grid-iron, rather than to deny Jesus Christ, and commit a mortal Sin?

A. No other answer ought to be return'd unto such Thoughts, than, that we well know what we ought in such occasions to do, but know not what we really should do. That we owe our whole Sufficiency to the Grace of Jesus Christ, which should He then vouchsafe to Grant us, it would purely prove an Effect of His great Mercy; But
that

that we sufficiently perform our part, if we but humbly and incessantly beg of him, not to permit us to be tempted above our strength.

Q. Can that Penitent be duely dispos'd, who, through the knowledge he hath of his own frailty, feareth to fall back in a short time into sin?

A. One may be very well dispos'd, and yet have cause enough to apprehend his relaps into Sin; for the Will may be good, and the Person firmly resolv'd to do any thing, whereby to prevent his Fall; Although he find not as yet himself strong enough to resist the Temptation, and feareth to yield thereunto. So far then is this Fear from being a Mark of our not being well disposed, that it rather argues a Sorrow for our own disordered Life, and purpose of Amendment, Provided that this Fear make us but to shun, with all possible care, the occasions of Sin, and perseve-
F rantly

rantly to demand of God the Assistance of his Grace.

Q. What ought we chiefly, in the Examen of our selves, to insist upon, the better to render our selves assured of the Reality of our Contrition?

A. We ought to take a serious Survey of our selves, and consider, If God be indeed the prime Object of our Love; If our main Care be to please Him; and to conserve his Grace; If we look on the concern of our own Salvation, as the most Important of all others; And if we abhor Sin as the greatest and worst of Evils. If then our Conscience bear us witness of our being thus dispos'd; and that this Testimony be seconded by the Purity of our Actions, We shall have Just cause to believe, that our Contrition is sincere; And withal to hope, that it will procure the remission of all our Sins.

Q. May

Q. May not farther Assurance thereof be yet had?

A. The best Marks of true Contrition are, in the Judgment of *St. Augustin*, the detestation of Sin, and Love of God; to find the Heart now avers'd from that, wherein before consisted its chief delight; to reject that now, as bitter, and disgustful, which seem'd before so agreeable and sweet. In brief, when that *now* causeth Affliction of Spirit, which most *before* contributed to the Satisfaction of the Flesh.

Q. Is a very sensible sorrow for sin, together with an abundance of Tears, necessarily required unto true Contrition?

A. No, for these sensible, and exterior Motions often flow from the natural disposition rather of the Body, than of the Heart: And many there are, who shed even floods of Tears, but without being

in the least touch'd or converted in Heart; as many true Penitents are contrariwise found, whose Sorrow is wholly Intern, without the least exteriour appearance at all thereof.

Q. What are the most assured Marks of true Contrition?

A. We judge of the Tree by the Fruit it bears, and may then securely presume our Contrition to be true, when it is accompanied by a change of Life; And when Afflicting our selves in the sight of God, we apply our selves fervently, and perseverantly, to the practise of those Works, which humble the Spirit, and chastise the Flesh; The best means indeed to satisfy the Divine Justice, to appease the Wrath of God, and to obtain his Grace.

IX. Instruction.

That those, who, through their own neglect, receive not due Instruction in matters of Faith; as those also, who being by God entrusted with the Care of Instructing others, apply not themselves with due diligence thereunto, have not true Contrition.

Q. *Can those have true Contrition, who are ignorant of the principal Points of Faith?*

A. No, because believing not, what they have not learn'd, they cannot but want Faith, the Ground of Justification; without which it is impossible to please God.

Q. *Doth it not suffice slightly to Instruct them, during the time of*

Confession, to render them capable of Absolution?

A. There is but small appearance, that God should on the sudden bestow on Persons, guilty of so great Negligence, so supernatural a Grace, as that of a firm, true, and divine Faith: They ought not then ordinarily to be admitted to Absolution, but dismiss'd, to the end, to seek Instruction, and prepare themselves by Prayer, and good Works, to receive the Grace of Faith.

Q. Ought Absolution to be denied unto those, who have neglected to learn the Commandements of God, and of the Church, or the Rules of Christian Life, especially such as properly appertain to their own Vocation?

A. So gross a Negligence cannot but argue such Persons little solicitous for the concerns of their own Souls, or Discharge of those

Obligations, which are Incumbent on them; And ought therefore, without Absolution, to be dismiss'd, until they shall have given good assurance of their having applyed themselves with convenient diligence, to the promoting of their own Salvation, to the understanding the extent of their own Duties, and to the acquitting themselves with Fidelity thereof.

Q. What is to be done with those, who provide not for the Instruction of their Children and Domesticks, nor allow them convenient leasure for the procuring thereof?

A. They ought to be admonished of the saying of St. Paul, to wit, That he, who neglects the Care of his Family, hath renounc'd his Faith, and is become worse than an Infidel. Absolution ought then to be deny'd them, until they shall have allowed to their Domesticks convenient time, and means,

to learn and practise the Rules of Christian Life. So Just a Severity would inform them, how hainous a Crime it is for Christians, to prefer their own temporal Interests, before the spiritual Welfare of their Domesticks, whom they ought, as Brethren, to look upon, and to provide Spiritually for them as such.

X. Instruction.

Of excess and vanity in Apparel, House - Furniture, Banquets, and the like, wherein many without scruple continue, who often Receiving the Sacraments, Accuse not at all themselves in Confession thereof.

Q. *IS the sin we commit in this kind more than Venial?*

A. There is no small cause to fear that many do often incur mortal Sin thereby: For

First, So great a Tye unto such Vanities, cannot but argue as great a Love for the World, and little, or none, for Jesus Christ. Infomuch, that although all kinds of excess cannot be said to amount to

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more

mortal Sin, yet are the Hearts of such Persons ordinarily so entirely destitute of the Love of God, which is the Life of the Soul, that one may say, judging according to the interiour disposition they are in, that they are not out of the state of mortal Sin.

Secondly, Because to comply with so great an expence, and maintain so exorbitant an excess, some other Commandement of God is often broken; Workmen, and Servants Wages are detained; Debts left unpaid, and Men disenabled to discharge them; Temporal Fortunes are either impair'd, or many Injustices committed in the Acquisition thereof.

Thirdly, Because what is thus dissipated in superfluities, ought to have been better employed in the Relief of the Poor.

Fourthly, Because the Vanities, we deck our selves withal, prove often-

oftentimes Allurements unto Sin ; And consequently render us guilty of all the ill Effects they work ; all the inordinate Passions they are apt to raise in others ; so destructive are they of Christian Modesty ; so Repugnant to the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*.

Q. Is not an immodest Dress more excusable in Persons of Quality, than in others ?

A. Christian Religion having not abolish'd the difference of Conditions, the difference of Habits, useful for the distinction of the said Conditions, is in no wise forbidden. But this can be no Warrant for the Use of that, which woundeth Modesty, and derogates from the Character of a Christian. Those Persons ought, on the contrary, to consider, That the greater the Quality they own, is, the greater Merit ought they to aspire unto ; and that being so
much

much the more oblig'd to promote, by the example, they ought to give of Modesty, the Edification of others, by how much their Condition raiseth them above the Rank of others; the Scandal, they give, renders them Guilty of greater Sin. We affect to imitate great Persons, and to endear our selves unto them. From whence it comes, that they no sooner appear in a New Dress, how vain, how immodest soever, but it presently starts up into a Mode, whereby they become responsible for all the Abuses, all the Disorders, all the Crimes which from thence ensue; the pretence of a present Mode, excusing neither the Inventors thereof, nor those that follow it.

Q. Are not many found Faulty in this kind, who yet constantly frequent, on Sundays at least, and Festival days, the Sacraments; and are observ'd to be remarkably Devout?

A. 'Tis

A. 'Tis to be Devout, but in
 exteriour Appearance only: 'Tis
 an Abuse of the Sacraments, and
 a Prophanation of the Sanctity they
 contain, to presume, wedded thus
 to the World, and worldly Vani-
 ties, to approach unto them. What
 Devotion, to defer more unto the
 World, than to *Jesus Christ*; What
 Devotion, when our Affections
 speak us rather Pagans, than Chri-
 stians; What Devotion, not only
 not to fear, by the Allurement of our
 Vanities, to Ruin a Brothers Soul,
 Redeemed with the Blood of *Jesus
 Christ*, but to make it our Ambi-
 tion to please Men, though with
 the Displeasure, and Offence of
 God himself.

Q. Whence comes it that these A-
 buses are so frequent?

A. St. Charles Boromans ascribes
 the growth thereof to the want of
 Resolution, which Ghostly Fathers,
 in Administring the Sacrament of
Penance,

Penance, often bewray ; whilst flattering such disguis'd Penitents in their disorders, they too easily Absolve them ; not Examining how they stand Interiously dispos'd, nor Admonishing them of the Spiritual Damage, the Excess of the Vanities, they Affect, is apt to cause.

XI. Instruction.

Of those who have contracted an habit of sinning Mortally.

Q. *Doth he easily become converted, who is habituated unto Sin ?*

A. It hath in the fourth Instruction been declared, how difficult the Conversion of a Sinner is ; And that it is a work of God's Omnipotency, and an Effect of the Powerful Operation of his Grace. From whence

whence you cannot but Judge of the condition of him, whom a long, and Inveterat habit hath rendred a slave to Sin.

St. *Augustin* had, to his Grief, experienced the truth hereof, when he thus expressed himself; (a) *The Devil had in his power my Will, holding me fast bound, as with a chain: For having once suffered the Will to grow depraved; habits engage us, which not being forceably resisted, a necessity ensues of our continuance in Sin.*

Q. Did St. *Augustin* easily surmount those his sinful Engagements?

A. No, not without great pains, and great labour on his part, with many a sharp encounter: Of which himself gives an account, in these Words. *I had a Will, my God, to serve thee with a Love entirely pure: But this Young, and Infant Will of mine, was too feeble to Master that other, which had gained strength, by*

(a) L. 8. Conf. c. 5.

having

having been long habituated unto evil. Thus had I two Will's, the one Old, the other New; the one Carnal, the other Spiritual, which assaulted each other, cruelly torturing my soul: By which it appeareth, that the Conversion of St. *Augustin* was not wrought without many a Conflict; and that the Conversion of a soul engag'd, by habitude in sin, cannot but prove a work of greatest difficulty.

Q. What ought one to Judge of him, who, upon the first good motion in order to an amendment of life, thinks himself already converted; and pretends, without more adoe, to *Sacramental Absolution*?

A. Such good motions ought to be look'd on, as a fair disposition towards a Conversion: But to think himself already converted, is not a little to deceive himself. Those seeds then of Grace and Salvation, ought to be well cultivated; but he
ought

ought not to be admitted to Absolution, till he hath brought forth fruits worthy of Penance, the marks of a true and sincere Conversion.

Q. But why think you that he deceives himself?

A. Because many a Conflict, length of time, great labour, plenty of tears, and as many sighs, are ordinarily pre-required to the obtaining of a new Spirit, and a new heart; especially when long and strong habits of Sin have taken root. Inclinations and Habits are not lost in an instant; nor is so great a Victory, as that over our selves, gained at the first assault. An heart sway'd by Avarice, and Impudicity, becomes not on the suddain liberal, and chaste: We die not in a moment unto pleasure and interest. The first Motion of Grace it self converts not such an heart.

Q. Can-

Q. Cannot God then in an Instant convert the most obdurate of hearts?

A. He can without doubt; because mans heart being in the hand of God, he can turn and change it as it best pleaseth Him; and that in an Instant, if he will: But he proceeds not ordinarily so, in the Conversion of Sinners long habituated unto Sin; He draws them not with a word only, out of the *Abyss*, into which they are fallen: 'Tis not the first shine of Divine Grace, which totally dissipates the darkness, they walk in; Nor gainses He the heart at the first sensible approach his Love makes. 'Tis true that God hath in a moment converted some few, and that great Sinners, unto himself; but such Conversions are rather not Examples, but Miracles, indeed in the order of Grace.

Q. Is it the opinion of the Fathers of the Church, that the Conversion of

a Sinner is a work of so great difficulty, and which requires so much labour and time, especially when Habits of so ill a nature, have taken root?

A. 'Tis what doth frequently in their Writings occur; *St. Cyprian* tells us, (a) that a deep wound is not cured, but by length of time, and application of many remedies. *St. Basil*, (b) That great Sins are not remitted, but by great, and reiterated Works of Penance; nor without the bitterness of many tears, and those accompanied with continual watches, and fasts. *St. Augustin* speaking of Mortal Sin; excludes it from hopes of Pardon, where the utmost essayes of an humble and contrite heart, where Affliction of Spirit, and true Penitential sorrow prepare not thereunto the way. He also elsewhere

(a) *Trac de lap.* (b) *ho. in hac Verb. attend.* G.

re-

requires, to the subduing of Vicious habits, the severity of Penance. To the same effect do also the rest of the Fathers, treating of Penance, speak.

Q. Is not God alwayes ready to receive into Favour even the greatest Sinners, when they fly unto him?

A. Yes: Himself having by his Prophet Assured us (d) that at what time soever we shall seek our Lord God, we shall find him. But ordinarily, we comply but ill with the Conditions required thereunto: The Prophet adding, (e) provided, that we seek him with all our heart, and in perfect bitterness of soul.

God desires not the death of Sinners, nor gives He them assurance of eternal Life, but on condition, that they so detest their sins, as to fall no more back into them; that they walk in newness of Spirit,

(d) Deut. 4. (e) Ezek. 18.

and

and Heart; that they keep his Commandements, and observe the Rules of Justice, &c. Now all these Conditions, the observance whereof God so rigorously demands, are the pure Gifts of his Grace, not to be obtained, but by many teares and Prayers.

XII. Instruction.

Of those, who fairly promise an Amendment of Life, but love too well themselves firmly to resolve to put in practise the Exercises of true Penance.

Q. *An Irresolute, and degenerate Souls, Pursuers of pleasure, be saved?*

A. The Council of Trent declares expressly the contrary; teaching that we ought to work our Salvation.

Sess. 6. c. 13.

tion

tion with Fear and Trembling; with Labour, Watching, Almes-Deeds, Prayers, Fasts, & other pious Exercises, proper to a Christian Life.

Q. Can you prove by any passage of Scripture, by which God himself speakes, the necessity of so great pains, Solicitude, Watching, Fasts, and Prayer, to the working our Salvation?

A. Listen to what the Holy Ghost saith in the Holy Scriptures unto us, (a) Strive to enter by the Narrow Gate, for I assure you, that many shall seek to enter thereat, and shall not obtain it; (b) Watch then, Praying without Intermission. (c) Stand on your Guard; Watch, and Pray, (d) be Vigilant, remain firm in your Faith, act manfully, put on the armour of vigour, and strength. (e) Be sober, and Vigilant, because

(a) Luk. 13. (b) Luk. 21. (c) Mar. 13.
(d) 1 Cor. c. 6. (e) 1 Pet. 5.

your

your Adversary the Devil, roves, like a roaring Lyon, up and down, seeking whom he may devour ; Resist him then, remaining stedfast in your Faith. (f) Those who engage in the Lists, observe with all exactness the Laws of Temperance, whilst yet 'tis but a corruptible Crown, they pretend unto: As for my own part, I run, and run not at a venture ; I fight, and fight not with the Air. But I chastize my body, and I bring it under subjection, least Preaching unto others, I become my self a Reprobate. (g) He who contends in the Publick Games, is not Crown'd, till he hath valiantly combated, according to the Laws, those Games prescribe. Those who belong to Jesus Christ, have Crucified their Flesh, as also their Passions, and their Irregular Desires.

After all which, Judge I pray, if these delicate, and tender souls

(f) 1 Cor. 5. (g) 2 Tim. 2.

can

can claim any part in Jesus Christ, and what pretention they can alledge unto that Crown, which is not promised, but to those, who shall so vigorously have subdued their own Inclinations, and had so vigilant an Eye to the concern of their own Souls.

Q. When such persons find themselves touch'd with sorrow for their Sins, and Promise amendment, but want yet the courage to encounter with themselves, or to undergo those Penal Works, which are requisite for the Advancement of their own Salvation, ought not one to believe them truly Contrite, & as truly Converted?

A. What promises, or protestations soever they make, we are not to heed such Conversions, as long as the Only mention of labour, or difficulty thus deters them, but they ought to be numbred amongst those of whom Christ said, They desire indeed to enter by the narrow

row gate, but cannot; because they love too well their ease. They still retain a kind of Inclination unto good, as also of aversion from evil, & feign would live and die in the state of Grace; but cannot resolve to use violence towards themselves, nor to exchange the sweets of this Life for the Cross of Jesus Christ; without which nevertheless the Grace of a true Conversion is in vain pretended unto:

Q. Do not such Persons however perswade themselves, that their Contrition is true, and their resolutions of an amendment firm and sincere?

A. Yes doubtless, and yet they but deceive themselves; For were their Resolutions such indeed, and could they be justly ascribed to a true Conversion of the Heart, they would soon find themselves enclin'd to embrace whatsoever should but in the least promote their own spiritual good; and lend but a deaf

Ear to what Self-Love should, to the prejudice of their souls suggest.

Q. From whence comes it, that so many are found in so Important a Point deceiv'd ?

A. The Devil, with little difficulty perswades them, that Mortal sin may be avoyded, without a last farewell to ease, without our renouncing the Contentments of this Life, and that such strict Fasts, such painful Watches, such continued Prayers are wholly needless thereunto. That 'tis to Cloysters that such Austerities properly belong: but that those, who live in the World, ought to live according to the stile of the World; being not oblig'd to be so devout, or to addict themselves to those Corporal Austerities, from which they are, by their state of life discharg'd. That tis enough for them, to have a will not to fall into mortal

tal Sin; but that to take so severe an account of the Interiour disposition of their own hearts, to enquire so narrowly into the truth of their Contrition, is to be too scrupulous, and too miserably to torment themselves.

Q. By what means are these deceits of the Devil to be avoyded?

A. By resisting him; and adhering, by a firm Act of Faith, to those Evangelical Verities, here above-mentioned. They ought also to reflect, that those, who live in the World, are more dangerously exposed unto temptations: which being unable to overcome, without the continual Aid, and Powerful Assistance of Divine Grace, which is not obtain'd, but by the means of Sighs and Prayers, they are oblig'd without Intermision to Watch and Pray.

2ly. That though the Spirit be prompt, the Flesh is frail: so that,

being notheld by continual watches, and pains in subjection to the Spirit, it cannot contain, but abandons it self to its own desires.

3^{ly}. That 'tis not to Persons only, living under a Monastick Rule, but to all who profess the name of Christians, that Christ said, (a) *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up daily his Cross, and follow me.* A Christian though in the World, ought not to be of the World, that is, he ought no longer to live according to the Spirit, and maxims of the World: For, (b) *If anyone love the World, the Love of our Heavenly Father is not in him. The love of the World carries an Enmity with it against God.* (c) *And Consequently, who becomes a Friend to the World, renders himself an enemy unto God.* To be then a Christian, is to converse

(a) Luc. 9. (b) 1 Jo. 2. (c) Jac. 4.

in

in the World, as if he were no part thereof, and to make use of the things of the World, as if he used them not ; which is to say, without any engagement, without any tye of our Affections to the World.

If we but attentively consider these so great and so important verities, we shall not easily suffer our selves to be mislead by those dangerous Illusions, the profess'd Enemies of our Spiritual and Eternal Good, the Devil, the World, and Flesh, hourly lie in wait to circumvent us withall.

Q. Do not many frequent the Sacrament of Penance, who are not yet firmly resolved to Crucifie their own Flesh, to curb their Inclinations, to Watch, Fast, and Pray to that degree, as is required to the drawing down the Grace of God upon us ?

A. The number of such persons is but too great, and they are principally

cipally those, who wholly devote themselves to Vanities, to Pleasures, to Ease, to Divertisements; wholly pass their time in Games, Toyes, and Idleness, allowing with difficulty enough: A moment only to those Affairs, where on the concern of their Eternal safety depends. These poor souls are too nice, too delicate, to venture, with a generous Resolution, upon any thing, which a true Conversion requires; and therefore, make they what promises they will, their words ought not to be relyed upon.

Q. What ought then a Confessour in such a case to do?

A. He ought with Prudence to observe the Ordinance of *St. Charles*; which enjoyns, that Absolution be in such a case suspended, till they shall have given more assured marks of their Conversion.

Q. Ab-

Q. Absolution would then be for a long time deferr'd, for it seldom happens, that any change, or amendment of Life ensues.

*A. When a Confessor, endow'd with the Light of Knowledg, and inflam'd with Pastoral Zeal, applies himself, with due diligence thereunto; It often falls out, that the charitable Endeavours of the one, and the humble Submission of the other, draw down a Blessing from Heaven upon both; And that God Almighty Illuminates their Understandings, and warms with his Love their Hearts: And then it is, that with Confusion resenting the failure of their Duty, as well towards God, as their own Souls, they begin to bewail their tepidity past, and life unprofitably spent; And put on New Resolutions to practise, with an Holy Fervour, what Exercises soever true *Penance*, or Christian Piety shall oblige them unto.*

But

But should but few yet become Converted, it would be no Warrant at all, for the admitting of such indispos'd Persons unto Absolution; nor ought we much to wonder, that so few amend their Lives; Verity it self having Taught us, That the Way, leading to Damnation, is broad, and that many walk therein; And that although many are said to be Called, few yet are Chosen, and the number of the Elect is small.

XIII. Instruction.

Of those who frequently Confess their Sins, and as frequently fall back into them.

Q. **M**ay not a Sinner truly Converted, fall back again into mortal Sin?

A. He

A. He may : Because the Grace he received at his Conversion, takes from him, neither the Instability of his Will, nor his Prowess unto Evil.

Q. But can a Sinner, who, after his Conversion, hath often relaps'd into Sin, become again Converted, and yet again fall back ?

A. That may happen, during the whole course of his Life ; this present Life being a State determined, neither to Good nor Evil ; but a middle State, between that of the Blessed, who cannot fall, and that of the Damned, who cannot rise : One may then, during the whole time of this Life, do Well, and do Ill ; One may Fall and Rise again : And as no Time, or Age excludes us from a possibility of Rising again, with divine Grace's Assistance ; so doth neither Time nor Age, exempt us, carrying humane Frailty about us, from

from Relapsing into Sin.

Q. Are then our frequent Relapses a reasonable ground to doubt of the Reality of our Contrition.

A. Yes: For though Humane frailty be so great, that, how eminent soever our Sanctity be, we may yet Fall; yet is there small appearance of the Reality of our Conversion, when we Fall, with such facility, into mortal sins, and that in so short a time.

Q. Explicate your self by some comparison.

*A. Although the Friendship of the World carry so little of Stability with it, that it may, in a moment, be chang'd into Hatred, as Hatred also may into Friendship; should yet any one load incessantly another with Injuries, persecuting him with daily Outrages, with continual Affronts; yet so, as not to fail each Sunday to demand his Pardon, and that with
new*

new Protestations of being his faithful Friend; Would such an one be thought well in his Wits, should he Credit such Protestations, and, with Embraces, continue him in his Catalogue of Friends? Can we then, without forfeiture of our Prudence, perswade our selves, That the Conversion of those Persons can be real, who having often, and Mortally, offended God, and made as often Protestations of Sorrow for the same, and again, as often renew'd their Purposes of offending Him no more, continue nevertheless still to Offend Him, still to add Sin to Sin; and think themselves Acquitted, if they shall again but renew their Protestations of hearty Sorrow, and wonted Resolutions of offending Him no more. What can it be less, than an Injury done unto God, to imagine, That he either knows not these false Penitents, or that he receives

receives them again, as true Converts, into Favour?

Would not those persons then, whom God hath entrusted with the dispensation of those Sacred Misteries, betray as well their fidelity, as their Prudence, should they suffer themselves so to be deluded by fair Words, and heed such resolutions, void of all Solidity; or lightly believe, that the Treasury of the Graces, and Merits of Jesus Christ, lay open unto those fad souls, who by their Impenitence, and iterated relapses, have rendred themselves just Objects of the Divine Indignation, and Vessels of the Wrath of God.

Q. Is it also the constant Judgment of the Holy Fathers that they cannot be truly Converted, who fall often back into mortal Sin?

A. Frequent relapses have alwayes been by them taken for so certain a mark of false Contrition,

on, that they have unanimously, as a certain truth, maintained, that they who fall so often back into Mortal Sin, were never truly converted, nor ought to be held; for such, till better proof thereof, then fair promises and bare words, appear. St. *Clement of Alexan.* saith, (a) That so confused a mixture of Penances and Relapses, rendreth us like unto those, who never arrived unto the Knowledge of true Faith, with this only difference, that these counterfeit Penitents know the ill they commit. And a little after addeth; That to ask continual Pardon for the Sins, we continually commit, carries with it some shew indeed of Penance, but carries with it little of Truth. Nor is it, but what the other Doctors of the Church do also Teach. It shall here suffice to recite the *eleventh Can.* of the *third Council* of Tol-

(a) 1. 2. Stro.

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ledo;

ledo; which expressly condemns those false Penitents, who pretend a Right unto Sacramental Absolution, as often as they shall fall back into Sin. *Having been inform'd*, say the Fathers of this Council, that certain Persons, in some Churches of Spain, presume to do Penance for their Sins, not as the Cannons prescribe, but after a manner too notoriously scandalous; perswading themselves, that the Priest is still, and as often oblig'd to admit them to a Reconciliation, as it shall please them to fall into Sin. The Holy Council to put a stop to so abominable a Presumption, ordaineth, That, in the Administration of the Sacrament of Penance, what hath been by the Ancient Cannons Ordain'd, be regularly observ'd.

Q. Are Confessors obliged to the Observance of the Rigour of the Ancient Cannons of the Church?

A. Although that Ancient Rigour

gour be much by custom Relax'd,
 and the Church no longer obligeth
 us to those great Severities, which
 the Cannons had anciently for each
 Sin ordain'd; yet cannot Confes-
 sors dispence with Penitents in the
 point of Satisfaction, due to the
 Divine Justice offended; nor with
 their appeasing, by true Contriti-
 on, and Works worthy of Penance,
 the Wrath of God. For it would
 be to abuse the clemency of the
 Church, and the Authority Christ
 hath entrusted them withal; should
 they presume to Absolve those,
 who by the small Amendment of
 their Lives, and frequent Falls,
 give but too much ground to be-
 lieve, That their Contrition is not
 as yet sincere, nor real, and their
 Conversion true.

*Q. Seeing that a Confessor ab-
 solves a Sinner once fallen after Bap-
 tism; why may he not also do it, af-
 ter many and frequent Falls?*

A. The Reason not only is, because, having in an higher measure abused the Mercies, and Goodness of God, he hath rendred himself less worthy of his Grace; and fallen into a far worse Condition than before: But also, because a Confessor cannot, with prudence, rely on Promises, which a Penitent hath so often broken: Nor is it but Just, that he expect better Assurance, then that of bare words, where Reason so apparently renders the sincerity of his Contrition liable to Suspition. And this it is, that Priests ought forcibly to Inculcate unto Sinners, guilty of so frequent Relapses, and Admonish them well to weigh that terrible saying of *St. Bernard*; *That as a Dog, returning to his vomit, raiseth a greater Horrour in others, than when he first cast it up.* So he, who after the Grace of Pardon once obtained, returns to his first

Dis-

Disorders; entitles himself to a deeper share of Damnation, then before.

Q. Is there not Joy in Heaven, when a sinner as frequently becomes Contrite, and as frequently Converted, as his Relapses into Sin are frequent?

A. What great cause is there of Joy, when a sick Person, after some small appearance of Amendment, falls immediately back? For what can such Relapses purtend, but death. In like manner, when the Eye of Heaven beholds the condition of a Sinner, no otherwise bettered, than by a meer forbearance for a while to Sin, and that he quits on no other design, the disorders of his Life, then to plunge forthwith again himself into them; What great motive of Joy doth it afford? Seeing the Inconstancy of such pretended Conversions, such counterfeit Contritions,

tions, can presage no better End, than Damnation for Eternity.

Q. It follows then, that such inconstant Conversions prove seldom Real, and such Contritions seldom True?

A. 'Tis undoubtedly so: For who can question, speaking of one truly Contrite, what Christ Affirmed; to wit, That there shall be greater Joy in Heaven for one only Sinner doing Penance, than for *Ninety Nine* Just, who need it not. Now what Appearance is there, that this should be verified of a Sinner, the course of whose Life seems to be nothing else, then to Sin, and to Repent; to Repent and Sin. It cannot then be but a great Truth, that such an one is no true Penitent, that is to say, A Sinner truly, and indeed Converted.

Q. What ought a Confessor to do, meeting with such Penitents?

A. He

He ought to represent efficaciously unto them the danger of the state they are in: charitably to Instruct them how, and by what means to work their Deliverance: He ought also to mind them of the Occasions they are to decline, with what they are to do, the better to merit the Grace of a true Conversion; and to Exhort them to a firm Resolution of securing hereafter none but God alone. Nor ought he as yet, as the Method of St. *Charles* well prescribes, To receive them to Absolution, till they shall, by evident Proofs, have assured him of a Change, and that they now are no longer what they were.

Q. How long ought Absolution, in such a case to be suspended?

A. For a longer or shorter Time, according to the Interior Dispositions of the Penitent, the Care he takes for his Amendment, and

Zeal, wherewith he applies himself to the Practise of those Exercises, which the Nature of Penance obligeth him unto. Nor is it but expedient, that he often confer, during the said time, with his Confessor, to the end, the better to acquaint him with the State of his Conscience, and to receive those salutary Instructions, which shall be requisite.

Q. Is not the refusal of Absolution a Wrong done unto a Penitent; especially if he consent not thereunto?

A. Not at all! Nay, a Confessor, when he shall find it to conduce to a Penitent's Spiritual Good, may prudently, for a time, defer it, though he find him not otherwise Indispos'd: With greater Reason then may he do it, having Just cause to fear, yea to believe, That the Dispositions, requisit to the Receiving of Sacramental Grace, are wanting. Ab.

Absolution may also, in the Opinion of all Divines, be Justly suspended, until such time, as a Penitent shall have comply'd with the Penance enjoyn'd; in case he be found, through negligence, or contempt, to have fail'd in the Performance of that, which had been in his former Confession Impos'd; So gross a contempt, or negligence, leaving just ground to fear, that he will no better perform the next. on Juster grounds then may Absolution be suspended, when no Change at all of Life appears: And a Confessor hath also cause to fear, That, notwithstanding all the Protestations, all the fair Promises his Penitent shall make, he will no more endeavour an Amendment now, than he formerly did, after all those goodly Resolutions, in his precedent Confessions made.

Q. *But what if a Penitent chance to die in the Interim of that suspension?*

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A. Absolution ought not, in case of eminent danger of death, to be delay'd ; provided a Penitent give but any token of his being well dispos'd. And in the like case of necessity, Absolution, though before suspended, may by any Priest be given. In brief, should death surprize a Penitent, whose Absolution had been defer'd, the Suspension thereof would be of no prejudice unto him, provided he were but really in heart Converted, and actually and truly Contrite. The Church having always believed, that Sacramental Absolution is, in such a case, by the Mercyes of God supply'd.

St. *Ambrose* believ'd the Emperor *Valentinian*, though without Baptism actually receiv'd, the Administ'rating whereof had been defer'd, to have yet Dyed in the State of Grace. And yet is not Baptism less necessary to Salvation, than

than Absolution. But when the Heart of such a Penitent is not truly Converted, it more avails both the Penitent & Confessor, so to have had that Absolution suspended, which neither the Confessor could give, nor Penitent, without Sacriledg, Receive.

Q. But is it not a thing full of Terror, to die without the Benefit of Absolution?

A. It is far more Terrible to Dye in Mortal Sin, which Absolution, given to those, who are not Converted, prevents not; but contrariwise, makes them, when Receiv'd, to dye guilty of Sacriledge, a greater Sin; and so but increaseth their Damnation. Is it not strange, that they, who, when they abandon themselves to Sin, apprehend not Death; should stand in such Apprehension of Death, when but the motion of doing Penance is made unto them.

Suspend but their Absolution,
and

and they strait despair, who hoped too much, when occasions of satisfying their vicious Inclinations, favour'd them. As if a greater share in God's Mercies were due to Sinners, obdurate, in Wickedness, and in actual Rebellion against Heaven, then to those, who do Penance, and submit themselves to the Ordinances of the Church.

Q. The Apprehension then of being surpriz'd by Death, before Absolution can be obtain'd, is no sufficient pretence, for the not suspending thereof?

A. Were that a sufficient Pretence, the Conduct of the Church of God were to be condemn'd; whose usual custom it was, not to Absolve those, who had fallen in to some Notorious Crimes, till they had undergone many Years of Penance. Baptism it self was also wont to be deferr'd till the Feast of *Easter*, and *Pentecost*; the usual time

times appointed by the Church for the Administring thereof: By which it plainly appears, That the Apprehension of Death, before Absolution obtain'd, is no sufficient Pretence, for the not deferring thereof, principally where Habits are contracted, and Penitents engag'd in continual occasions of Sin.

Q. But how are Penitents to be dealt with, who often change their Confessours, never declaring, that they have at other times fallen into those Sins, which they then accuse themselves of?

A. Prudence, and Duty oblige a Confessour, to examin his Penitent, as to the Habits he hath contracted, and Relapses he is subject unto, when he shall have observed the Sins he Accuseth himself of, to be of that kind, unto which Men are most habituated, and fall ordinarily back into.

Q. But

Q. But what if a Penitent refuse to answer thereunto; thinking it sufficient to accuse himself of such Sins only, as he shall have, since his last Confession committed?

*A. Should a Sick Person refuse to discover to his Physitian, the state of his Distemper; of what durance it is; how many accesles his Feavour hath met with, and the like: Who would not say, That he but mock'd his Physitian, and sought not really a Cure for his Disease? In like manner, if a Penitent refuse to express himself, as to his Relapses, and Habitude he hath to Sin; what doth he but deride his Confessour, or rather indeed, *Jesus Christ*, whose place he but supplies; and renders the Distemper of his Soul incurable? A Sick Man is otherwise to be govern'd in the Progress of his Infirmary, than at first. A Sinner in like manner, waxen Old in Vice,*

that is, in the state of sin, and in the state of death.

or Guilty of continual Relapses, ought, after a different manner, to be treated, from him, whose sinful Distemper but begins.

XIV. Instruction.

Of Penitents, who continue in the occasions of Sin.

Q. *What is understood by the Occasions of Sin?*

A. That which causeth us to offend God, or draws us into danger thereof: whether it inclines us of its own Nature thereunto, or that it happens through any Engagement, Habit, or Frailty of our own.

Q. *What call you an immediate Occasion?*

A. That from which Sin ordinarily follows.

Q. *Is*

Q. Is it a mortal Sin, to continue in the immediate occasion of committing it?

A. Yes: And though it sometimes happen, that we Actually commit it not, we nevertheless ordinarily incur Mortal Sin, as often as we put our selves into the Occasion thereof, a Thing which few reflect on, and as seldom Accuse themselves of.

Q. Can a Penitent believe his Contrition to be true, who quits not the Occasions of Sin, or quits them not but for a time?

A. He cannot with Reason believe it; for 'tis to will the Sin, not to avoid that, which casts us into danger thereof; or is ordinarily the cause of our committing it. It cannot then be, that one should have a sincere, and firm purpose of falling no more into Sin, where a firm Resolution is wanting of flying all Occasions inducing thereunto.

Q. But

Q. But are there not some Occasions, which cannot be avoided, without falling into some other Sin?

A. Yes; An Husband, for example, who cannot forsake his Wife, if it so fall out, that through his own frailty, she be unto him an immediate Occasion of Sin, not to be avoided, without the committing of another Sin.

Q. What ought, in such a Circumstance, to be done?

*A. First, Of two Evils, the greater is to be shunn'd; 2^{ly}. The Occasion, which ariseth from some Passion, or Frailty of our own, ought rather to be avoided, than that, which our Condition, and state of Life exposeth us unto; provided, such a State be not of its own Nature evil. 3^{ly}. The Grace of God ought to be, with profound Humility, and self-Confusion, implored, to the end, the more effectually to encounter, and
van-*

vanquish this Passion of ours; as also, to break off all Engagements, and to resist the first Thoughts, which shall surprize us, together with the first Enticements unto Sin. 4^{ly}. We ought to apply our selves to Actions of Piety and Vertue; especially such as shall be most opposite to the Inclination and Passion, which chiefly causeth our Fall.

Q. If the occasion of Sin cannot be avoided without loss, or considerable damage, is one then obliged thereunto?

A. Yes; What loss, what affront, or other prejudice soever shall ensue. But yet if such an occasion did chance to happen through the frailty of the Penitent, and that a Confessour discover'd in him a more than Ordinary fervour, together with a firm and sincere resolution to undergo, whatsoever he shall be advised unto,
in

in Order to the humbling of himself, & disposing himself for the obtaining the powerful assistance of Gods Grace; some time may be allotted him to make tryal, and exercise himself therein, without retrenching, all at once, the said occasions. But let him here take heed, he flatter not his Penitents, nor rely on words, which would be to abuse both himself and them.

Q. Is it not to be, as well too scrupulous, as too severe, thus to oblige Penitents, to quit all occasions of sin, what Inconvenience soever arrive thereby?

A. 'Tis but the severity, which the Gospel prescribes, and but the Conduct of Jesus Christ. Of whom it might be as well demanded, why he was so Scrupulous, and so severe, as to say, (a) If thy right Eye, that is, whatsoever is dearest in this life unto thee, occasion thy

(a) Mat. 5.

fall,

fall, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: And if thy right hand, that is, whatsoever is most useful unto thee; be unto thee an occasion of Ruin, cut it off, and cast it also from thee; so it is more available unto thee, that one Member of thy Body Perish, then that the whole be cast into Hell.

Which is in effect the same, as if Christ should say; if any thing there be, which occasions our fall into sin, though as dear unto us, as the Apple of the Eye, or as necessary as our Right Hand; yet ought we to relinquish it; the suffrance of what loss, what Inconvenience so ever, being less to be regarded, then to fall into Sin, and from Sin into Hell?

Q. Is the frequent haunts of Taverns, Tipling Houses, and other the like publick places, to be looked on as an occasion of Sin?

A. Such

A. Such a course of life cannot but be liable to many disorders; such as are, Drunkenness, Blasphemies, Execrations, Oaths, Lascivious discourse, dissolute Actions, detractions, Quarrels, Batteries, the Dissipation of Estates, Ruin of Families, with little or no care of Wife, Children, or other domestick concerns: From whence arise those discensions, those heats, those opprobrious replies, with other violent transports, which are but daily seen, to the disturbance of the Peace of Families, and not without confusion, and scandal to the Church of God.

The Admittance then of such a sort of People to Absolution, is not at all practicable, till they shall have embraced a more laudable course of life, and absolutely quitted the haunt of those Nurseries of Vice.

Q. How

Q. How are the Masters of such places to be dealt with, who make it their endeavour to draw such guests unto them, and not only permit those debauches mentioned, but for their interest promote them?

A. They are without all excuse, rendering themselves guilty of all the scandals, all the disorders they permit, and which are by so reprobate a sort of People there committed; who make such Places their Rendezvous, claiming the Liberty to do and say at will: And therefore cannot those publick Houses be better to any thing compared than Hell, where good is not known, and evil only Reigns: And as the Master of the place becomes, by tollerating for his own advantage, such abuses, the most guilty; so ought his share in damnation to be greatest. By which it appears, that making their Habitations the nest of such Impieties,

ties, they ought not to be received to Absolution till they shall have quitted so Irreligious an employ ; or reform'd at least in such sort their Vocation, that their Houses become no more so prophane a Retreat, but serve only to furnish Passengers and Strangers with convenient Aliment, and other necessary accommodation, such as need shall require.

XV. Instruction.

Of Penitents who refuse, or neglect to perform the Penances which are enjoyn'd; And make but little, or no account of Venial Sins.

Q. *Why do the Holy Fathers call the Sacrament of Penance a Baptisme of Labour and Pain?*

A. Because we cannot without many sighs and tears, nor without great Affliction, as well of body as of mind, recover that Purity of Soul, which we receiv'd by Baptism, and lost again by sin.

Q. *Why so?*

A. Because to render our selves slaves unto the Divil by sin, after having been Adopted Chidren of
God

God by Baptifmal Grace, cannot be but an injury done to the fpirit of Grace, and an outrage to the Blood of Jefus Chrift; a wrong not fo eafily repaired, as the failings of thofe, who have no knowledge of a God, nor were ever vifited by the Rayes of his Mercies. It is then but Juft, that they, who have abus'd the firft Grace, by means whereof they obtain'd the Remiffion both of Fault and Pain, fhould not be again without great labour and pain, re-admitted thereunto: To the end, that being thereby inform'd of the enormity of fin committed, after Baptifmal Grace receiv'd; and knowing with what difficulty Grace once loft, is again recovered, we become the more apprehenfive of the lofs thereof, and endeavour with greater care when obtain'd, to preferve it.

What is it then, having already abus'd his Mercies, but to expose the Justice of God to mockery, not to have a will to recover his Grace by preventing his Justice ; that is to say, by revenging on our selves the Rebellion of our own delinquencies. In a word, it is to be too delicate, and to set on Grace too low a value, not to have a Will, by the rigours of Penance, to regain it ; Nor is there any appearance of true Contrition, where a Will to afflict our selves is wanting, and the meer shadow of the pains, our sins deserve affright us.

These so tender souls then, dreading the thought of Penance, and wholly indisposed for the receiving of Sacramental Grace, are not at all to be admitted to Sacramental Absolution, whilst they thus refuse to comply with such Penances as are salutarily enjoyn'd.

For

For if Confessours ought with compassion to resent the frailty of their Penitents, they ought not to flatter their ease, nor indulge their sloath, which would be to encourage sin; nothing more powerfully restraining relapses thereinto, than the imposing of Penances proportioned to the quality of the Crimes.

Q. Is it for that end, that Penances are impos'd?

A. No doubt; And observe what the Council of Trent teacheth, (a) Penance withhold us like unto a curb, from Sin: It also renders us both more wise, and more watchful for the future. It is also a Sovereign Remedy, by the Vertue whereof the remainder of sin is taken away, and ill Habits caus'd by an ill life, are cured; and this by the application of our selves to those Vertues, which are opposite to the Vices we are

(a) Ps. 24. c. 18.

most inclin'd unto. Moreover, if by way of satisfaction for our sins, we submit our selves to some little sufferance, we become thereby Conformable to Jesus Christ, who abundantly satisfied for us, and is the true source, from whence flow the Merits of all the satisfactions we can make.

Q. What think you of those Penitents, who pretend by the saying of five Paters, and five Aves, to make satisfaction for mortal sin?

A. What can be more ridiculous, then to call Penance, a Baptisme of Labour and Pain, (if the recital only of five *Pater's*, and five *Ave's* were sufficient, to make us comprehend the enormity of mortal sin, and beget in us a due apprehension of falling back into it. It would prove an easy Remedy, if so short, and easy a Prayer could cure our ill Habits, and put a stop to the current of our disorders. We should in fine, participate at
an

an easy rate in the sufferance of Jesus Christ, if five *Paters* and five *Aves*, could beget in us a Conformity to so Divine a Saviour, Languishing for us unto death upon a Cross.

Who see's not then, that it is to contemn, yea to expose the Sacrament of Penance unto mockery, so to reduce unto five *Paters*, and *Aves*, all those Sighes, all those Tears, all those Fasts, together with all those other Penal Works, which were many times of many years durance, and that for one mortal sin alone.

Q. Do Confessors sin, when they enjoyne light Penances for Mortal sins?

A. Yes doubtless; and ought to tremble, if they attentively Weigh'd what the Council of *Trent* declares on that Subject, saying, (a) That Priests are oblig'd to en-

(a) Ibid.

joyn Salutory Penances, and proportioned to the quality of sins, and condition of the Penitents, according as Prudence shall dictate, and the Spirit of God direct them; lest indulging them too much, and flattering, or dissembling their faults, they become guilty of the sins of others, by not having enjoyn'd but light and easy Penances, for great and Enormous Crimes. Let them above all be careful, adds the said *Council*, that the Penances they enjoyn, seem not only to redress the Penitents frailty, and hinder his relaps into sin; but also as a salutary punishment for his past sins; Conformably to the Opinion of the Holy Fathers, who Believ'd and Taught, that the Power given unto Priests, is as well to bind, as to loose.

Q. Is it not Prudence in a Penitent, to make choice of a Confessor, who enjoyns but light and easy Penances?

A. It

A. It is both Blindness, and Impiety : It is to reject the Cure proper for his disease ; to shew himself insensible of the enormity of his Crimes ; and consequently, but ill disposed, yea unworthy of the Grace he pretends unto. *The mark saith St. Gregory, (a) (or the Author of the Commentaries on the Books of Kings,) of a true Conversion, consists not in the verbal Confession we make, but in the Bitterness of our Contrition ; For we then esteem a sinner truly Converted, when by the sensible sorrow he expresseth, and Austerities thereunto proportion'd, he endeavours to cancel that, whereof he both accuseth, and owne himself Guilty.*

Q. What ought one to Judge of a Penitent, who maketh no account of Venial sins ?

A. One many rationally believe, that he either wholly wants the
(a) c. 6. and v. 9. c. 15.

Love

Love of God, or Loves him but little; seeing he so little fears to offend him. From whence it is easy to infer, that his Conversion is defective; and that he but faintly desires, but faintly wills his own Perseverance in Grace; and as faintly resolves to fall no more: For arrive thereunto he cannot, if the Love of God renders not it self Master of his heart, and lesser sins be not with all possible care avoided; those especially, unto which the proneness of his own inclination leads him. It is an excellent saying of St. Gregory, That He, *Who neglects to bewail, and avoid venial sins, falls wholly at last from the state of Justice; and though this happen not at once, 'tis yet by little and little done: Like unto a Ship, into which the Water enters but by drops, but yet becomes at length so overcharg'd, that yielding to its own weight, 'tis carried to the bottom.*

A certain Archbishop of great Sanctity of life, and of the same Judgment with so great a Pope, Recommends nothing more, than not to neglect the least of sins; leaving it for a Maxim worthy to be imbraced, That a Christian ought not to believe that any sins are little, or that any offence against God is small.

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THE DAILY
EXERCISE
OF A
Penitent Soul.

1. **F**ail not to Rise in the Morning Early, and believe that God, of his Goodness, hath granted you that Day, to the end, to do Penance for your Sins. And reflecting, That it shall perhaps be the Last of your Life, make a firm Resolution to employ it well.

Consider next, the end for which you have been Created, which is no other, than to know God, to Love, Serve,

Serve, Praise, and Bless Him, during the course of this Life, and for all Eternity.

Forget not that God hath given you a Body and a Soul, and generally all you have, and are Possessed of, in order to the same End, for which He Created you. And that it will be to abuse those Gifts, and prove but Loss of Time, to apply them to any other use or end.

Resolve firmly to do nothing, but what you shall know to be Acceptable to Almighty God, regard being still had to the State, and Condition his Divine Providence hath placed you in.

2. You shall apply your self, for some time, in the Morning, being awaked, as also a little before Noon, and at Night, before you betake your self to Rest, seriously to examin, and enquire into the present State of your own Soul; Entertaining

not

not at such times, your thoughts but with God alone, by the exercise of those Interior Sentiments, which are here beneath prescrib'd.

3. Endeavour to be dayly present at the Sacrifice of the Mass, representing to your self, by an Act of Lively Faith, the Bloody Oblation, which Jesus Christ made upon the Altar of the Cross, as if you were effectively present on Mount Calvary, and as if this were the very Moment, in which He there yielded up the Ghost for your Sins, but approach not too near the Altar, calling to mind your own unworthiness to be present at so dreadful a Sacrifice; and that you ought, according to the Ancient Ordinances of the Church, to be expel'd from thence.

If your Affairs, or other accident shall divert you from being present at Mass, assist at least thereat in Will and Affection, sending thither your Thoughts and Heart; especially when

the Bell shall give Notice of the time, when the said Sacrifice is to be Offered up.

4. Forget not, that wheresoever you are, you are in the Presence of that Sovereign and Supreme Judge, whose Sentence shall one day render you Happy or Accurs'd for all Eternity. Set then a Watch over all your Thoughts, Words, and Deeds; avoid with all care the Occasions of being drawn into Sin; and decline, as much as may be, the danger of vain Conversations, needless Diversifements, and the like.

5. Have always in your Memory certain Prayers, called Facultory, to the end, to raise frequently up, by the use thereof, your Heart and Soul to God; nor omit to carry some Mark or Token about you, which may serve to renew the Remembrance thereof.

6. In all the Afflictions which shall befall you, or which others, though unjustly shall cause you to suffer, remember that it is the hand of God which Inflicts them, as a Penance for your Sins; Embrace them then with Patience, and receive them with all humble submission, as from his Hand; and Offer them up again for that end unto Him.

Neglect not also daily to Mortify your self in some one kind or other. Dispencc, for Example, on Sundays, with Divertisements, and be present, with due Devotion, at the Divine Office of the Church. Fast on Frydays and Saturdays; Abate at other times an Hour of your wonted Repose; or deny that in particular unto your Appetite, which you find most agreeable unto it; and fail not to Relieve with your Charitable Almes, the Necessities of the Poor.

If you shall feel any good Motions, or if any good Thoughts shall occur:

If you shall experience any Amendment of Life; or shall have done any good Work, assume not the Glory thereof unto your self, but with all Humility acknowledg, that it is God alone, who hath wrought that Good in you, through the Grace, which Jesus Christ hath merited for you. You ought therefore to render Him the thanks, as also with an entire Confidence to desire Him to perfect in you, what it hath pleased his Goodness to begin: and if He shall at any time abandon you to a driness of soul, withdrawing from your Heart the sweets of Heavenly Consolation; lose not Courage, but acknowledging your self unworthy of so extraordinary a favour, continue your Exercises with Patience, resigning up your self entirely to his Conduct, be it in the way of Roses, or of Thorns, as it shall best stand with his divine Pleasure.

THE

The Interiour
Sentiments or Affections,
OF A
Penitent Soul,

For the Seven Days of the Week.

For the First Day.

Happy are the Just, for they
are the Servants, the
Friends, and the Children
of God.

To serve Thee, my God, is to
Raign indeed; What an Happi-
ness then to be of the number of
thy Friends and Children?

If God be with us ; who shall be against us ?

Miserable Wretch that I am, I have lost by Sin, the most Sovereign of Goods ; and am become a Slave to the Devil, and Child of Perdition.

Who can deliver me from the Misery into which I am fallen ? who shall be able to Convert this Heart of mine, which hath put on the hardness of a Rock ? Who shall give me a New Spirit, that I may walk in the way of thy Commandements ?

I confess, my God, that being left by Thee unto my self, I am wholly unable to Convert my self, by my own force unto Thee.

I Believe according to thy Holy Word, that I cannot become master of one good Thought, if it be not through thy Mercy, by Thee inspir'd.

I am unworthy O Lord, that thou

thou should'st have any Remembrance of me: And if thou cast me for ever off, thou shalt do but Justice, and I shall have no cause to complain.

Be thou for ever Blessed, my God, who hast not denied me thy Grace, and hast given me a Will to become Converted unto Thee.

'Tis Thou, my God, who hast inspir'd me with this desire, for in vain, without Thee, should I have pretended unto it.

Oh my God, I humbly beseech Thee, through thy infinite Mercies, to perfect that in me, which thou hast, with so great Love begun; I can do nothing without thee, and with thee I can do All.

Is it not true, that at the Font of Baptism I renounc'd the Devil, and all his Poms; and is not this Promise of mine, Seal'd with the Blood of JESUS Christ, by whose Merits thou didst Purify me.

Why have I then so soon cast off this Robe of Purity, and trampled under foot his Blood. Oh how Terrible a thing is it to fall into the Hands of the Living God. 'Tis thy Mercy, my God, not thy Justice, I humbly recurr unto.

For the Second Day.

OH Great God, and Eternal Verity, it is impossible, without Faith, to please thee; and it is again as impossible to procure this Faith, if by thy Grace thou grantest it not. Give me it then, Lord, and I will be ever Faithful unto Thee.

Thou knowest all, Lord, and can'st not fail. Thou art the Sovereign Goodness, and can'st not deceive us. I Believe then, Lord, that all which Thou hast Promised and Reveal'd, is infallible. I
par-

particularly believe, That it is by thee, that the Wicked are justified; and that it is thy Almighty Hand which beginneth, and bringeth so great a Work to perfection.

It is thou, my God, that workst in us the Will and the Deed, as Thou pleasest.

I also Believe, That thou Justifiest the Wicked gratuitly, not in consideration of any Merits of his, but purely through thy great Mercyes.

Should'st thou cast me off, as thou hast done so many *Jews*, so many *Gentiles*, so many *Christians* of evil Life; yea, the *Devil* himself; thou wouldst do but what becomes thy Justice, and I should have no cause of complaint.

I farther yet Believe, That all the Graces, which are generally given, be it to Believe in God, to Hope in him, or to Love him;

as also the Grace of the Remission of our Sins, with that of our Justification, are not given unto us, but in consideration of the Merits of *Jesus Christ*, and principally of his Death and Passion.

It is what I Believe, my God, with all my Heart; and yet my incredulity stands in continual need of thy Aid. Vouchsafe then, my God, to strengthen, and to augment my Faith.

For the Third Day.

IT is against Thee alone, my God, 'tis before thee, and in thy divine Presence that I have sinned; how great an Enormity is it to have so often contemn'd so infinite a Majesty.

As Great as thou art in Glory and Magnificence, so great are my Sins in malice. Oh how Enormous

mous are the Crimes I have committed against thy holy Commandements by Works, Words, and Thoughts; How great is the number of them!

How often have I had a Will to Sin, could I have but avoided the Chastisement due thereunto.

When I attentively consider thy Commandements, I find my self in all things Guilty.

I have sinned against Faith, Hope, and Charity; as also against all other Vertues.

The sins of others lye heavy without number on me, which I either advis'd, or in some sort approved of; at least I hindred them not, as I ought, or else administred the occasion.

Christ Jesus hath suffered death for us; teaching us thereby, that the end of our Creation is not the enjoyment of temporal fortunes; but that we ought to live to him alone,

alone, who dyed for us ; Oh how ill have I complied with that fidelity I owe unto him.

The Fourth Day.

OH, how great is the number of those, who now burn in Hell for the same sins, which I, miserable wretch, so often have committed. How great, I say, is the number of those, who have now been plung'd, and that for so many thousands of years past, amid'st those dreadful flames, and yet never perhaps so haynously offended God as I have done.

Oh Fire, never to be quench'd :
Oh Worm, which gnawest the
Conscience, and shalt never dye. Oh
Eternity, Eternity ; Oh accursed
and insupportable Eternity ; Oh
Sentence full of terrour ; (a) Be-

(a) Mat. 25.

gon from me, ye Accurs'd, Begone into eternal Flames. Oh severity of Justice, which shall for all Eternity cry out, *Multiply his Torments, add unto his Sorrows*. (b) *with proportion to the Pride, he exalted himself withal, and to the Delights he abandon'd himself unto.* And will it not perhaps be to day, perhaps this very moment, that God shall pronounce against me this so formidable a Sentence.

I confess, my God, That I have merited these Pains, but firmly Hope withal, that thou wilt, through the abundance of thy Mercyes receive me into Favour.

I hope my Lord, that thou wilt not only not condemn me, but admit me to the fruition of that happiness, which eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor heart of man is able to comprehend; seeing thou hast not spared the Blood, nor Life of thy own, and only Son to save

(b) Apoc. 18.

us.

us. Have pitty on me, 'tis thy mercy, my God, I demand, through the merits of his bitter Passion and Death.

Lord, who didst call a King *Manasses*, a *Magdalen*, a *Thief*; and many other Sinners to Repentance, Receive me into the Arms of thy Mercies. Happy are those who abide in thy House; they shall Bless, and Praise Thee for all Eternity.

For the Fifth Day.

OH Abiss of Mercy, and undrainable Source of Grace! I despised Thee, and thou didst Love me, even to that excess, as not to spare for my sake, the Life of thy only Son

All this thou dost, my Lord, and yet who am I? and who art Thou? Thou art All, and I am nothing.

nothing. I am a miserable Creature, and a slave to the Devil; and Thou art an Eternal God, and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Oh eternal Bounty and Wisdom: Oh infinite and incomprehensible Perfection; why have I ever offended thee?

What do thy Commandements contain, but what is most Just? why have not I then kept them.

Thou didst command me, Lord, to Love thee above all things, and it is but reason, seeing thy infinite Goodness surpasseth all, which can merit Love. It is also but just that I Love my own Soul, which is immortal, more than my Body, which tendeth to Corruption; that I Love, for the Love of thee, my Neighbour as my self, doing unto others, what I desire they should do unto me; That we be more solicitous for that which is eternal, than that, which can-

cannot be but for a time. It is, in fine, but just, that we live according to the Rules of Sobriety, Chastity, and the like: These things are all by thee, O Lord, commanded, and I therein acknowledg thy Eternal Wisdom and Justice.

Thy Justice, Lord, is Justice from all Eternity, and thy Law is Verity. Thy Works are perfect, and thy Gifts inestimable. But who shall ever be able to comprehend the Perfections, and Goodness of Him, who is the true Source, from whence all these Gifts flow ?

Oh Beauty, infinitely Amiable!
Oh Verity! Oh eternal Justice!
How Late do I begin to know
Thee; how Late to love Thee!

The

The Sixth Day.

WHat could I hope to find out of thee, my Lord, but Filth, Malice, and Iniquity? I for ever detest whatsoever I have committed against thee.

Grant me, Lord, the Grace of tears, to bewail my Impieties, for it is against thee I have sinned.

I have abandon'd, and despis'd thee, O Eternal Father; Thee I say, who hast created me, and conserv'd me with such Fatherly care.

O Lord Jesus, who by thy Death hast saved me; who by thy Sacraments hast purified me; who in the Holy Eucharist hast nourish'd me with thy Body and Blood; how often have I undervalued, and trod under foot this Precious Blood of thine?

O Holy Ghost, by how many Sacriledges have I prophan'd thy holy Temple, defiling my self by so many sins; my self, I say, whom the Font of Baptism had rendred the Consecrated, and Living Temple of God?

No wonder, Lord, if thou punish sin with eternal pains, the malice thereof being infinit, and incomprehensible.

It repents me Lord; yes, it heartily repents me, to have sinned against thee, Great God, to whom all Love, all Obedience, all Submission are for ever due.

I detest, not for a time only, but for ever, all mortal sin; but above all, because it displeaseth thee, my God, I am here firmly resolv'd to fly, not only Mortal sin, but even all occasions enviting thereunto. And protest that my chief care shall be to observe thy Commandements, and to persevere in thy Grace.

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Conserve, Lord, and fortifie by thy Grace this resolution of mine: And grant my God, that I rather choose to die, than ever to fall into mortal sin again; it is this Grace I humbly demand of thee, through Jesus Christ thy only Son.

The Seventh Day.

I Acknowledg, my God, my own Insufficiency to make that Satisfaction, which is unto thy Justice for my sins due. I offer them up unto thee, in lieu thereof, the Merits of my Saviour Jesus Christ, and particularly his Death and Passion.

The Church heretofore ordered seven years Penance in punishment for one only act of simple Fornication; What Penance then do not the disorders of my life past deserve?

By

By the committing of how many sins have I offended my God, and that to satisfy the appetites of my flesh, and the desires of my senses.

Just God, it stands but with all reason, that I undergo all suffrance, in punishment, and satisfaction for so many, and so great crimes of mine; and that, what sinister accidents soever befall me, I submit to thy Divine Will, notwithstanding the repugnance of mine own natural Inclinations thereunto. I am then willing from henceforth to believe, that it will but stand with Justice, that all worldly disgraces, together with all the miseries of this Life, overwhelm me, and shall, my God embrace them, and with all readiness suffer them, as a due Penance, which thy just Hand shall have laid upon me for my sins.

The Holy Scriptures teach me,
that

that thy Wisdom powerfully extendeth it self to all the extremities of the Earth; and that thy Divine Providence disposeth of all the disgraces, all the evils, which can befall us, though through the malice and injustice of men. It is then my part to submit thereunto, and to adore the same.

Let me then receive any wrong, let me meet with Injuries, let me fall into contempt, let me be exposed to mockery and scorn: I will suffer it, my God, and receive it as from thy holy hand; being well assur'd, that nothing can befall me, but by the order of thy Providence, and in less measure, than my sins deserve. Thou art Just, O Lord, and thy Judgments are equitable in the chastisement of my crimes.

If I shall be visited with sickness, or adversity, I shall still own it, much less, without all complaint,
then

then what will be due unto thy Justice.

I look on my self as a guilty Person, justly condemn'd to death, but whose Execution is for some time delayed. If the exercises of a Christian Life be practised with difficulty and pain, I have well deserved to suffer more; so far be it then from me to neglect, or omit any part thereof, that I purpose with exactness to perform them all.

Long Prayers, the truth is, are uneasie, Fasting incommodes me, Alms-Deeds sute not with my Avarice, nor doth my humour lead me to reprehend, or correct others. Nevertheless as there is no labour, or difficulty, which I ought not to surmount in order to Penance for my sins, so is there not any one of these things mentioned, which I will decline.

What I demand of thee, my God, through the Merits of thy dear Son
is,

thy is, that whatsoever I shall do or suffer,
 I may do, and suffer it in the Spi-
 rit of true and Christian Penance;
 and that in fine, I may place my
 whole confidence, not in what I
 shall do, or suffer for thee, but in
 what Jesus Christ, thy Beloved Son
 hath done and suffered for me.
 Permit me only to joyn my satis-
 factions unto those, which he of-
 fered up unto thee for the sins of
 all the World; and I shall remain
 assured through thy Mercies, of the
 Remission and Pardon of all my
 sins.

MEDIA

MEDITATIONS

Proper for a
Penitent Soul.

I. Meditation.

*Of the Fear of the Judgment
 of God.*

MY whole life affrights me,
 for making a strict enquiry
 thereinto : I find it to have been
 almost wholly wasted in sin, with-
 out having done any good at all :

This is the second of *St. Anselms* Medi-
 tations.

Or

Or if any thing hath perhaps carried any appearance with it of good, it hath been with so many Imperfections accompanied, that it could not be but displeasing to the Eye of God, at least not pleasing unto him.

Behold then, O sinner, not almost all, but assuredly thy whole life spent, either in sin, which proclaims thee a Criminal; or in Idleness, which ought to cover thee with shame. But why put I a difference between an idle & a Criminal life? A life of Idleness, or of which comes no good, cannot be but Criminal: A Verity not to be doubted of; Verity it self having said, *That every Tree bearing not good Fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the Fire.* In fine, if I do any good, which may chance to tend to the benefit of others, it is not still worth the nourishment I receive; and of which I make so ill use: and who would

L

feed

feed a Beast, whose service Countervails not the meat he eats? And yet, my God, thou disdainest not to nourish with so much Bounty, and Patience, not only an useless worm, but even a sinner, and worst indeed of sinners. The stench of a dead Dog, rotten, and turn'd to corruption, is certainly less insupportable, less offensive, then is unto Almighty God, the ill favour of a soul dead, and putrified in sin.

Wretch that I am, being rather indeed the dishonour of Mankind, than a Man, of less value then a beast, and less sufferable then the noysamness of a stinking carcass.

Ah! My life is become burdensom unto me; but as I am ashamed to live, so do I fear to dye. What then remains, but that during my whole life, I bewail my whole life, and that my whole life cease not to bewail it self.

But

But what surprizeth me most in this unhappy condition of mine, and most deserves to be in this surprize lamented, is, that the sorrow my Soul feels, is in no wise answerable to the knowledge she hath of her own misery; and that she liveth, and languisheth, with as much security, as if she were wholly a Stranger to her self. Unprofitable soul, what do'st thou? from whence flowes this so supine an insensibility, knowest thou not that the day of Judgement is at hand? that the great Day of our Lord approaches? And that thou shalt see, sooner then thou imaginest, this day of Wrath; this day of trouble and anguish; this day of affliction and misery; this day of darkness and obscurity; this day of Tempests and Storms: In fine, this day of the Trumpet, which shall awake and cause the dead to rise. O how terrible is

but the mention of this day of our Lord? What! Tepid soul, which meritest to be by God Repudiated; What! sleepest thou still on? He, whom so loud a Thunder awakens not, and causeth not to tremble, Alas! he sleeps not, but is dead indeed.

Dry & withered Tree! Where's the Fruit thou oughtest to have born? Tree which merit'st not but the Ax and Fire, nor canst expect less, then to be cut down, and reduced to fuel: Where's, I say, the Fruit thou should'st have brought forth? Thou hast yeilded but sharp thorns, and bitter Fruit; but God grant that the points of these thorns, though blunted thereby, may force an entrance sensible, and deep enough to wound thee unto true Contrition; and that the bitterness of thy sins prove so medicinal, as to work the Remission of them.

Thou

Thou thinkest perhaps, that, of sins, some are but small, and of little account; but God, who is to be the Judge, will find none so small, or inconsiderable, as many think? What! do not all sins, by reason of the Disobedience they carry with them, tend to the Dishonour of God? And shall a sinner then presume to say, that his sins are but of small, or no account? As if, to dishonour God, could at any time be but of small account: Oh peice of Wood, dry, and fruitless, and meritting no less then Eternal Flames; What answer wilt thou make at that Great day, when an account, even of the least glance of an eye; an account of each moment of thy life shall be demanded; each minutes passage thereof, shall be narrowly sifted into? Then shall a Sentence of Condemnation pass against what shall appear, as well in thy Actions, as in thy forbearance to act; as

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well in thy words, as the silence
thou hast observed: Not the least
of all thy thoughts shall pretend a
priviledge of exemption: Nor shall
it escape, to have liv'd, and not to
have liv'd to God alone; whose
sole Will ought to have been made
the Rule, and End of thy life.

Ah Wretch! how many sins,
which now escape thy knowledge,
shall then, like Enemies rushing
forth of an Ambush, in whole
Troops assail thee, more doubtless
in number, and more perhaps enor-
mous, then those which now occur.
How many things, which now carry
with them an appearance of Good,
shall then in their true colours ap-
pear, and appear great sins? 'Tis
at this moment thou shalt reap ac-
cording as thou hast sown, during
this life? 'Tis I say at this moment
that all gates to Mercy shall be
shut; at this moment, when sorrow
for sin shall be fruitless; at this
moment

moment, that promise of Amendment, shall be too late.

'Tis now then the time, that thou oughtest seriously to reflect on what thou hast done, and what thou art to receive. If the Good thou hast done, be much; and but little the bad, thou hast then cause to rejoyce; but if the bad surpasses considerably the Good, Oh 'tis then thou hast cause, and just cause to lament.

Ah! Worst of sinners! Is not the very thought thereof capable to draw from thee even the deepest sighs, and to change into floods of tears the blood of all thy veins?

Oh Hardness, even to astonishment, which stroaks, so violent, are yet too weak to work upon, Oh, to what degree is all sense of feeling lost, where points so sharp, so piercing, lose their force? Oh how profound a sleep; sleep

I say of Death, where so formidable an Alarum rouseth not up at all.

But there is enough said on this Subject Improfitable Soul ; enough said to induce thee, and that without intermission, to Lament ; enough said to nourish thee with thy own Tears, without ever putting a stop unto them.

But why lay I not open the whole Series of those miseries, which so nearly threaten me ? why dissemble I them ? why conceal I them from the view of my own soul ? Would I that the most dreadful of all Tempests should discharge it self on my own head, and that at once ? or that sorrows not foreseen, should, at unawares, oe'rwhelm me ? It behoves not a sinner so to do.

But should I unburden my self, of whatsoever my thoughts can suggest, concerning the Account I
must

must render of my Life, and pains due unto my sins ; it will still, alas, be nothing, in comparison of what it is indeed.

Let my Eyes then, without cease, melt night and day into tears. Augment sinner, Augment the Weight of thy miseries : Add terrour unto terrour, cries unto cries ; reflecting, that thou art to have him for thy Judg, whom thou hast injured by disobeying God, and violating his Laws : Him I say who hath rendred thee Good for Evil ; & unto whom thou hast made no other return, than of Evil for Good : Him, whose hand Patience now with-holds ; but shall then manifest himself in rigour : Him, whose mercies only now take place, but whose justice only shall then act its part.

Unhappy creature ! against whom have I sinned ? 'Tis a God that I have injur'd ; 'tis the Omnipotent I have offended. But just Wrath
of

of the Almighty, overwhelm me not: Just Indignation of the Highest, I am not an object Worthy of thee; and am yet less able to support the force of thy Arm.

Oh! into what Straights am I fallen? on this side, I behold my own sins, which accuse me; on that the Justice of God, which affrights me; beneath I behold the dreadful Abyss of Hell open; above, my Judge Armed with Wrath; within me, I feel the fire of my own Conscience, which devours me; And without, I discover the World all on a flame. With difficulty, and that enough, shall the just be sav'd: Whither shall the wicked, surpriz'd in his crimes by Death, betake himself?

Environ'd with these extremities, where shall I hide my self? How, oh how shall I dare to appear? To hide will be impossible, to appear, will be intollerable. I will

will seek a place of concealment,
 but that will not be; I will decline
 appearance, nor will that be grant-
 ed. What will then, Ah! What
 will then, I say, become of me?
 Who will rescue one out of the
 Hands of this Great God? Whom
 shall I resort to for Advice? Who
 will save me? Who is he that is
 called the Angel of Great Counsel
 and a Saviour, that I may address
 my self unto him, and call him by
 his Name, with all the force my
 Voice will reach unto. Who is
 he? Why 'tis a Jesus: But alas,
 'tis He, 'tis a Jesus Himself who
 is my Judge, into whose Hands to
 fall 'tis terrible to think on.

However, since, here it is, that
 thou oughtest to abate thy Fear,
 and mitigate thy Disquiet, despair
 not, but place, even in him thy
 hopes, whom thou fearest, cast thy
 self into the Armes of him whom
 thou hast unhappily deserted, cry,
 and

and that with all importunity after him, whom thou hast with so great Insolence offended. O *Jesus*! O my *Jesus*! for the love of that Name, be thou unto me, what that Name inviteth me to hope for. *Jesus*, *Jesus*! forget the Pride and Insolence of a sinner, and cast the Eyes of thy Mercies on this miserable creature, who humbly demands Pardon at thy Hands. O *Jesus*! how sweet is that Name? how delightful is that Name? What hopes, what Consolation, doth not that Name afford?

For what Importeth *Jesus*, but a Saviour. O *Jesus*! be then unto me (for the love of thy self) a *Jesus*: Thou hast made me to be what I am, suffer me not to Perish: Thou, who hast Redeemed me, Condemn me not: Thou, in fine, who by thy Bounty hast given me a Being, permit not, that, through my own malice, I cast my self away.

way. O Benign *Jesus* ! let not my Iniquity destroy, what thy Omnipotent Bounty hath made: Own in me what is come from thee, and cleanse my Heart from whatsoever owes not its being unto thee: Mercy *Jesus*, Mercy ! whilst time of Mercy is, and Damn me not at the day of thy Justice: what advantage wilt thou reap by my Blood ? and by thy precipitating me into Eternal death ?

They are not those Lord, who descend into hell, that shall praise thy Holy Name ; shouldest thou, my God ; receive me into the Arms of thy Mercy, which is Infinite : It would not prejudice their being still as open, their being still as farr, extended as ever : receive me then, O most Amiable *Jesus*, receive me into the happy number of thy Elect, to the end, that together with them, I may Eternally Praise and Enjoy thee, placing my whole Glo-

ry in thee, together with those, who love thy Holy Name, and confess thy Glory to be with the Father, and the Holy Ghost for all Eternity.

II. Meditation.

*The Lamentation of a Soul which
bath sin'd against Purity.*

AH! my Soul! my Afflicted Soul!
my unhappy Soul! Soul of a
Wretch unworthy the name of Man!
Quit this languishing condition of
thine, and duely reflecting on thy sin,
rouse up, and let confusion, and
horror be the entertainment of
thy thoughts call to mind the enormity of thy Crime; & let thy grief of heart discharge it self into cries of lamentation. Ponder with Attention the heinousness of thy fact; and
let

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let sorrow and fear joyntly seize thee with their whole force at once. Thou, I say, whom Celestial Waters had purified ; Thou who did'st both by Promise, and Oath dedicate thy self to Jesus Christ, and clad thus with the Robe of Purity, wast chosen for his Spouse.

But what is it I now call to mind ? The Name of whom did I so lately mention ? Alas ! of no other than the dear Spouse once of my Integrity, but now the severe judge of my impurity. Ah ! sad Remembrance of the Happyness I have lost, why addest thou thus new load to the weight of the miseries, I already groan under ? But deplorable state of guilty man, whom good, no less then Evil, afflicts ; For on the one side I find a bad Conscience as bad a Punishment as the flames, in which I fear for ever to burn ; and on the other, the very remembrance of a good

Conscience, and of the rewards due by promise thereunto, no less torment me ; a loss too great to be without great difficulty repair'd.

Ah ! Loss irreparable ! Loss which lieth so heavy on me ; having lost that, without hopes of recovery, which I ought carefully to have for ever secured from danger of loss. Inconsolable loss, having not only lost the best of Goods, but drawn on my own head the worst of evils. Oh Purity, which I no more now dare to call my dearest, but my lost jewel ; which I no more dare to stile my delight, but my despair, what is become of thee ? in how foul, and stincking a mire hast thou left me ? Impurity, which hast perverted my mind, and bereaved me of my soul, how camest thou thus to take possession of my heart ? How camest thou to cast it thus down from the Purest and best of states ?

That

That then which causeth my grief, and which afflicts me, is, to have thus fallen from the best of states; but that which causeth my pain, and makes me yet to dread far greater, is to have committed so foul a crime: This loss torments me beyond all consolation; and this transgression of mine renders me liable to chastisements not to be supported: so deplorable on all hands is my condition, such straits what way soever I turn my self, am I fallen into. Oh good, Oh evil, so it is, yea so it is, that ye with justice punish that unhappiest of Creatures, whose life ye design to render miserable. Nor is it indeed but what I well deserve; for thou hast shewn thy self, my soul, both disloyal and perjur'd towards God, and an Adultrous in respect of Jesus Christ: Thou art fallen from the sublime state of Virginity, and hast inconsiderately precipitated

pitated thy self into the fordid gulf of all impurity.

Thou, whom Heavens King had called to be his Spouse, hast through the heat of passion prostituted thy self unto the Devil: Poor wretch, rejected by God and abandon'd unto him ; or rather who hast divorced thy self from God, and delivered up thy self a prey, by a voluntary engagement, to so foul a Fiend. Accursed, yea more than Accursed change, to have cast him off, who had not only bestowed on thee thy Being, but also given thee such assurance of his Love, to adhere to him, who never sought but guilefully to contrive thy ruin. Ah ! from whence am I fallen, how have I thus cast my self down from the highest of all states, to the deepest of all Abysses. Wo unto me, who have thus forsaken him who is essentially goodness it self, and adjoyn'd my self unto him, in whom malice only reigns.

What

What hast thou done? Blind Folly of mine? blind passion, detestable impurity, what hast thou done? Thou hast left in Heaven above a Chast Lover, to follow, even unto Hell, an Enemy, unto whose abusive perswasions thou hast so easily yeilded thy consent; and hast made choyce, not of a chaste bed, but of a place Famous only for Infamy, and debauch. What Horrors accompany the corruption of the Will? and how loathsome is the sinck, of a voluntary prostitution?

Who can, my God, repair this corruption of mine? What satisfaction can my God, be made to thy Divine Justice for this so heinous an offence? Let thy retirement be unhappy man, the deepest and saddest Abyss of sorrows; Let the weight of the most vehement of all Grievs or'whelm thee; thee, I say, who hast walked

lowed in the mire and Stench of Hell it self. Worst of Criminals, let the darkness of inconsolable sadness swallow thee up, who tookst delight in the filth of all lubricity. And having in fine solaced thy self in thy impurities, what rests but that thou drown thy self in a sea of Bitterness.

Come dreadful apprehensions, come sorrows without measure, come Grief irremediable, come and assemble your selves together, come and cast your selves upon me all at once; oppress me, destroy me; 'tis but just, but just. I have had the boldness, the impudence to despise ye, and by my impurities to provoke ye all or rather; God indeed, then ye: And now, behold, I invoke you all through a regret capable to move Compassion. Torment then so guilty a Person, and revenge, on me, the cause of God; make so voluptuous

ous a delinquent to feel the pains even of hell it self, which he hath merited : Give him a tast of the Punishments he hath for himself prepared ; to the end that he inure himself to those torments, he is so justly hereafter for ever to endure.

Sinner, whose Impurities knew no moderation, nor Transgressions, bounds ; Let thy Repentance also, let thy sorrows know none. Plunge and replunge thy self in the Waters of thy own bitterness, who did'st so often plunge thy self in the foul gulf of voluptuous uncleanness, consolation, security, joy. I no more desire ye, I pretend no more unto ye, if the Remission of my crime envite ye not back, and procure not your return ; I am content to be deprived of ye even unto death, provided my sin meet then with pardon, and I again with ye after death. Let a rigorous,
and

and continual course of Penance accompany the rest of my dayes, and let the Repentance due unto my fault, become the worst of Executioners, without intermission to torment me; let grief and sorrow afflict me during the whole remainder of my life; God grant it, yea God grant it so to be; 'tis what I heartily wish, 'tis what I earnestly demand, 'tis what I desire. For if I am no longer worthy to lift up my eyes to Heaven in prayer, I have well at least deserved to weep them out. If the reproach of my own Conscience puts me to shame, not permitting me to address myself to Heaven, 'tis but just that the Violence of my own sorrows cast me into confusion; and if fear forbids me to present my self before God, 'tis but reason that I represent unto my self the punishments my sin deserves.

Let

Let then my heart think, and without intermission rethink what it hath done, and what it hath justly merited. Let my thoughts descend into that place, covered with darkness, and with the shadow of Death; let them descend thither I say, and behold what is there laid up in store for this guilty soul of mine. Let the consideration thereof be their entertainment, and let their sole trouble, and inquietude be to think thereon.

Oh my God! What discover I in this place of Darkness, in this place of Eternal Misery? Where no order is, where horreur, and nought but horreur shall for ever inhabit? Oh! 'tis nothing but howling, nothing but a confusion of cries, nothing but an eternal Repetition of Wo, Wo, that I there hear. Nothing do I there see, but tears, but gnashing of teeth.

Fire

Fire of Sulphur, fire of darkness, fire of Hell : What work mak'st thou ? how formidable is the Operation of this fire ?

Worms, which live amid'st these flames, with what eagerness do you Gnaw, with what ardour do you devour ? and that without danger of being consum'd by the most active, the most ardent of all Fires. Devils whose infernal rage incessantly vents it self amidst those unquenchable flames ; Why treat you with such severity your own Companions in sufferance ? Torments of all kinds, moderate indeed, if the justice be considered which inflicts you, but yet above all comprehension insupportable in respect of those, who are adjudg'd to endure you, will your Rigour never abate ? and shall the pains, you oblige poor suffering souls to groan under, be without remedy, or end ?

Are

Are those then, Great God, the Punishments, thou hast provided for the voluptuous, and such as despise thee, of which number I am so unhappy as to be: Yes, I am I confess, of that infamous number: Ah, my soul! How canst thou then but tremble? Why fail not all my spirits? Why forbearst thou, my Heart, to split in sunder? Ah! torturing crime of mine, whither draggest thou me? Ah sin of mine! Whither precipitatest thou me? Ah my God, to whom deliverest thou me up? If my offences rendred me Guilty in thy sight, and against thee, am I therefore no longer a Creature of thine? If I have lost my Purity can I rob thee of thy mercy. If I have given thee cause enough, my God, to damn me, hast thou thereby lost any part of that, by which thou art wont to save? heed not then my God, the evil I have done, so as to forget that good, which

which is essential unto thee.

Where is, Great God of Verity, where is that assurance, which thou gavest us, saying; *I live, and will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he become converted and Live.* Lord, who canst not lie, what is this, Lord, that thou sayest, *I will not the death of a sinner*, if thou bury in Hell a Sinner, who recurrerth to thy Mercies? To throw down, into Hell, is that the same, with, I will that a sinner be converted, and that he live? I am a sinner Lord, yes, I am a sinner; If thou wilt not then the death of a sinner, who can compel thee to do that, which thou hast not a will unto? to wit, to condemn me unto death: And if thy Will be, that a sinner become converted, and live, who can divert thee from doing, what thou hast a will to do? and consequently from converting me, to the end, that I live. Is it the heinousness

nousness of my crime, which obligeth thee to that which thou hast not a will unto? and debarreth thee from doing that to which thou hast a will, thee, who art a God Omnipotent: Let it not then, O God Omnipotent, be said, no Lord God, let it be never said, that the malice of a sinner, who acknowledgeth his fault, and is Repentant, is more prevalent, then the Word of a God, who hath Power to do, whatsoever he hath a will to do.

Remember then great God of Justice, God of Sanctity, God of Clemency, Remember that thou art Merciful, my Creator and my Redeemer; But my God, forget withall thy Justice, which ought to punish this sin of mine, and think but on the Bounty thou hast for a creature of thine: Forget that Indignation, which a poor Criminal had obliged thee to put on, and think but on that mercy, which a

poor

poor Penitent humbly recurreth unto.

My crime merits, I confess, damnation, and the Penance I do, bears no proportion with the satisfaction due unto thy Justice: But it is no less certain, that the sins of all mankind, are no less disproportioned to the greatness of thy Mercies, Pardon then Merciful God, who desirest not the death of a sinner, and alone canst save, pardon my guilty soul: She flies from thy Justice, which affrights her, to thy mercies, which fill her with Consolation; to the end, that having forfeited, by the prostitution of her self, all pretence to that Crown, which Virginity layes claim unto; she escape, at least, by the means of Salutary Penance, the punishments due unto those, who have suffered shipwrack of their Purity. 'Tis what my God, I hope, know-

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knowing it is to be neither above thy Omnipotency, nor unbeseeming thy Justice, nor unusual to thy Mercy ; because thou art all Goodness, and thy Mercy is Eternal, who art for ever Blessed : So be it.

III Meditation.

Of Sin.

Verity.

TO sin, is to love that which God hath forbidden us to love, or not to love, and not to have a will to do that, which God commands us to love, and do.

Consideration.

SEeing that the Will of God cannot but be infinitely Holy, a Will opposite thereunto, cannot but be infinitely criminal and unjust.

Reflection,

HOW often, my God have I lov'd, and done that which thou hast forbidden me to love and do? Thou hast forbidden me the love as well of sottish Vanities, as the enticing Pleasures of the world; yet have I lov'd both, yea even lodg'd my affections on them! How highly culpable am I, then My God, become in thy sight.

How often have I also neglected, or slighted the doing of that, which thou hast commanded to be done; I have neglected to adore thee as
my

my God, to Honour thee as my Lord, to Love thee as my Father. With what indifferency have I demean'd my self towards my Neighbour, especially if indigent, and distressed, how little love have I had for him? But which is yet worse, what hatred have not I harboured; what detractions, what calumnies, have not I uttered; what quarrels have not I interested my self in; what occasions of revenge have not I sought; or have at least desir'd it.

O my God, I have Lov'd nothing, and done nothing, which thy Will was I should have lov'd, and done: And have lov'd, and done what thou didest forbid me to love, and do, how faulty then hath my whole life been?

Sorrow.

AH! my God, what ought not
so great impieties to dread
from

from so just and Hand? 'Tis this load of my transgressions which humbles me at thy feet; and leaves me no more voice, then from the bottom of my heart to cry, Pardon my God, Pardon a sinful soul, which hath violated thy Ordinances; but will hereafter entertain no thought but of an entier submission to thy Will. Pardon great God, Pardon a guilty Wretch worthy thy heaviest chastisements; but yet suppliantly recurring to the abundance of thy Mercies.

Resolution.

I Detest the disorders of my life past. I will no more love, or do, what the Justice of thy Laws forbids; but will seriously apply myself to love and do, what thy commandments, for ever Holy, shall enjoin: I will carefully fly, as well the least thought, as all occasions of evil,

evil, and embrace none but such as shall encline me to good, and lead me unto thee.

Prayer.

STrengthen, my God, this Resolution, which thy Grace hath given birth unto, and let me rather choose to die, then ever to become again disloyal unto thee.

IV. Meditation.

Of the Blindness which accompanies Sin.

Verity.

WE Live in Sin, and fear to die.

Confession.

Consideration.

IT stands but with Reason, and Justice, being in the state of sin, to fear death; the inevitable consequence of Death surprizing us in sin, being the eternal ruin of our souls. But what is there less consistent with Reason and Justice, then fearing death, to live in sin. If we fear death, because it must ravish those Objects, in the love of which our sin consists; It is the height of Impiety to desire never to die, to the end that we might alwaies live in sin.

Reflection.

IT is true, my God, that the apprehension I have of death causeth one even to tremble, the very thought thereof makes me, I confess, wax pale, and my blood to

con-

congeal : It being that, which shall in an instant reduce this body of mine, which I now pamper with ease and delicacies; to the condition of a carcase, insupportable to the best of Friends, that I say which shall spoyl me of whatsoever others find in me worthy of love; or I find out of my self, worthy of esteem, 'tis at this fatal moment that I shall become to the rest of Creatures but matter of Horrour, and they to me but matter of Grief.

Yes, I once more avow it, and I declare it before thee, my God, that if I did so sensibly fear death, not fearing at the same time to offend thee, the sole cause, alas, thereof was, the Anxiety of mind I then felt to loose, and be bereaved of that, to which my Vanities, my Pleasures, and other crimes owed their whole support.

Sorrow

Sorrow.

AH! my God, What Impiety accompanies such a Fear? What disorder of Afflictions, where the Heart lies under such an engagement unto Creatures. I feared Death, but I fear'd not to sin. Ah Impiety! how I detest thee.

Resolution.

I Will hereafter fear death, and not, considering my own guilt, without good cause: But it shall be on no other account then the fear I have to die in sin: And fearing to die in sin, I must resolve to live no longer in sin; seeing that to live in sin, will be to die therein.

Prayer.

Prayer.

IT is the Light of thy Grace alone, my God, which discloseth unto me these so important Verities : Let then the Nails of so just an apprehension pierce my Heart, that acquitting me of all Attachments as well to Creatures as myself, they may inseparably fasten me unto thee. Grant my God, that this Salutary fear dispose this heart of mine to love thee, and thee alone.

V. Meditation.

*On the same Subject.**Verity.*

Finding the Will too weak to resist sin, and sway'd by too strong an inclination to the love thereof, we easily perswade our selves, that the sin we commit is not so great, but rather much less then indeed it is.

Consideration.

IT would be little consonant to reason, to fancy that a fall should be less dangerous because of the less force we have to sustain our selves, and greater violence, we are carryed withall upon it. It would be an Imagination very ridiculous.

diculous to think, that the more the Root is cankred, the less tainted is the Fruit which the Tree bears, or to believe the waters less perilous, where the source is most envenomed.

It would be pleasant sport, if to comfort a sick person, one should tell him, that his Feavor was well abated, and of less danger, because the humours of his body were more disordered, In fine, it would be little to understand the Injustice concomitant to Injuries, to pretend, that an Injury proceeding from an heart swollen big with aversion and hatred, should be the less great, and more worthy of pardon. And would it not be an Impiety to affirm, that the stronger the Love is, which unites us unto God, the less of sanctity do our Actions carry with them.

What an Extravagance then; what an Impiety is it to believe,

That the greater our Frailty is, and stronger the Inclination we have, to Love the Sin; the less will the malice of the Sin be? This Weakness of the Will owes not its growth but to the force of the Inclination we have for the sin. Who dares now to think that the greater the love is we have for the sin, the less will the sin be. And if it be true, that the greater the engagement of the Will unto sin is, it yields the more readily its consent: What doubt can there be, but that the more readily it consents to sin, the more it sins.

Reflection.

WHat Illusions (my soul) have thy thoughts lain under? when thou didst sin, thy self furnish'd thee with an excuse, thou pretended'st not to justify thy self, but by charging thy own inclinations, thy own frailty with the blame

blame; Addicting thy self to Vanities, to Interest, to Pleasure, to Creatures: Thou said'st unto thy self, 'tis my frailty, which draws me thereunto; 'tis my Inclination which overflows me; and didst not discover, that the greater thy frailty, the stronger the Inclination was, the love thou hadst for sin; which rendered thy sin the greater.

Sorrow.

OH, the Enormity of my crimes! No more of excuse, my God, but, my God, Pardon: I am without Excuse, but thou art not without Mercy. Pardon, my God, that insolent Pride of mine, which so often alleadg'd that, in excuse for its sin, which did indeed augment it. Pardon I ask thee, my God, for all those Criminal Attatchments, which engag'd me not in sin, but by inclining me too much to love it.

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Resolution,

I Detest them, my God, and I
 Condemn them, to the end that
 thou Condemn not me. That frail-
 ty, which, whilest I built Excuses
 thereon, lifted me up against thee,
 shall hereafter only serve for my
 Confusion, by teaching me, that
 without the Aid of thy Puissant
 Grace, I cannot but meet with Fall
 upon Fall and that all I can do, is but
 to lose my self. No, my God, that
 Propensity, which drew me into Sin,
 shall no more engage me therein;
 nor shall it serve for other use, than
 matter of Combate against my self.
 From this very moment, my God,
 I here declare a War against those
 Vanities, that Liberty, the very
 Thought whereof begets in me an
 horreur: A War, I say, against all
 those terrene and sordid Interests,
 as also against what else soever,
 this

this Heart of mine, by the ill manag'd Love thereof, hath hitherto been besotted withal. I will no more sigh, my God, but after thee; nor will I settle my Affections on any thing but thee.

Prayer.

Fortify, my God, my frailty by the force of thy Grace; Grant that a Love truly Holy, triumph over this Criminal Inclination of mine; And my God, my glory in Thee shall be thy Triumph over me.

VI. Meditation.

*On the same Subject.**Verity.*

WE will love the thing which involves Sin, and will yet perswade our selves, that we love not the Sin.

Consideration.

SEeing that to Sin, is nothing else, than to Love that which is a Sin; to have a Will to love that, which is a Sin, is doubtless to have a Will to Sin, and to Love the Sin. To Love that then which is a Sin, and yet to perswade our selves, that we Love not the Sin, is a strange Stupidity, a Blindness to be pittied;

ed ; 'tis to have a Will to force our selves into a belief, that Sin is not Sin ; to have a Will, that Vice should become Vertue ; and that Sin should put on the Nature of Justice.

Reflection.

SUCH is, my God, the Condition of my Soul ; I could not believe that I did love the Sin ; and was convinced that my Heart loved nothing but that which involv'd the Sin. How often did I flatter with this Thought my Passion ? I intend not to Sin, no, it is not God that I have a will to Offend : How often amidst the too culpable Satisfaction, which I sought ; amidst the Vanities, too much favouring of the World, which I pleas'd my self in ; amidst those Passions, which transported me of Choler, Interest, and Revenge ; in the liberty
and

and freedom I, in private, gave my self over unto, where Pleasure was all I aimed at? How often, I say, amidst these irregular desires of my Heart, did I say unto my self, 'tis not the Sin I propose unto my self, nor have I any intention of Offence against God: As if I loved and willed not the Sin, willing and loving that which infer'd it.

Ah! this Blindness cannot proceed, but from that tye, which hath so fast link'd my Heart to Vanities, to Interest, to Passion, to Pleasure; and, in a word, to Creatures. It cannot but spring from thence, that having not the power to deny any longer unto them my Love, I was willing, to the end, not to Condemn my self, to shelter my so doing under a pretence of Justice.

But how great a Crime is it not, so to be enslaved to Creatures, and to love Sin to that degree, as to wish that Sin were become Vertue; or
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at least, that Evil were no more a Sin, that so I might, with less scruple, love Evil, and Sin with greater liberty. With so little reason then can this Blindness of mine be alledged in Excuse of the irregular Affections of my Heart, or disorders of my Life, that it is it which causeth my Sin, and reproacheth me with my Crime.

Sorrow.

YEs, my God, I own it in thy Presence, and with bitterness of Heart. I have loved Creatures, I have loved Vanities, Pleasures, with what else soever contains matter of Sin, and Offends Thee; and would needs, but too erroneously, perswade my self, that it was not the Sin which I loved. I avow, my God, that this Blindness is a pain due to my Sin, and the cause of my Fall. And 'tis this Blindness which

which I heartily detest. Pardon, my God, so faulty, so blind a Creature.

Resolution.

I Do no longer, my God, believe, nor ever will, that that Love is not Injurious unto Thee, which is placed on Creatures, with the Exclusion of Thee: I acknowledge, and always will, that to love that which involveth sin, as Vanity, Pleasure, Passion, or the like, is to love the sin it involves. In this perswasion then, my God, persisting, the hatred I will bear unto sin, as an offence against thee, shall disengage my affections from all unlawful pleasures, from all idle Vanity; yea, generally from all Creatures, which I cannot without sin love, or adhere unto without the loss of thee.

Prayer.

Prayer:

BUt, my God, what can be of force enough to dispel these Charms, which hold me so fast linked unto Creatures, but the Power of thy love, which alone can Unite me unto thee. What can enlighten this darkness of mine, the cause of my going astray? but those Beams, which discovering thee unto me, can alone conduct me unto thee. These are the Beams, my God, which a poor blind Creature craves to be illustrated withall. 'Tis this Divine Love; with which I pray thee to enflame my Heart, to the end that it love thee, and thee alone.

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VII: *God:**ayer.*

VII. Meditation.

*On the same Subject.**Verity.*

WE live in sin, and promise
our selves pardon for
the same.

Consideration.

GOD is Good, 'tis true, But
God is also Just, and is there-
fore just, because he is good. It
is his Goodness which moveth him
to hate sin, and which armeth his
Justice against the transgressions of
men. It is an effect then, as well of
his goodness, as his Justice, never
to pardon him, who continues in
sin,

fin. God cannot give us his grace, and not cancel at the same time the sin he finds in us: Nor can he approach unto us, but by the removal of sin from us.

If we consider the nature of sin, what can it less merit then the Vengeance of God? What can it expect, but due chastisements? And in fine what more opposite to Pardon then Injuries, and Insolences, or the hopes of pardon, where Injuries are continued?

Reflection.

WHither did thy thoughts, my soul, wander in the pursuit of Pleasures, in the love of Vanities, and in the freedom thou gavest thy self of committing all other sins? Thou did'st insolently flatter thy self with the conceit of pardon, and did'st say, God is good, and did'st still run on in sin.

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Yea

Yea thou would'st sometimes say,
 I will recurr to the Tribunal of
 Penance; and in the very thought
 thereof did'st abandon thy self to
 sin. Ah! thou did'st not observe
 the injury thou didst, both to the
 goodness and grace of God at once
 thou did'st not reflect, that this
 deceitful hope of thine, rendred
 them but subservient to thy Iniqui-
 ties, taking from thence an occasi-
 on with more freedom to sin.

Sorrow.

AH! my God, how deplorable
 was this too great confidence
 of mine, rendering me insensible
 of the crimes I committed? Ah!
 my God, how blind are these
 hopes, how vain, which so delu-
 ded me with the thought of Par-
 don, when Vengeance was all my
 offences could expect. But my
 God, how enormous was that pre-
 sump-

sumption, which thus flattered me in my sin, and by the assurance it gave me of thy grace rendred me but a Child of thy Wrath? To take the liberty to offend God, because his Goodness is all Mercy, What a crime! Is it Reasonable, my God, to offend thee, because thou art good? to sin against thee because thy Mercies abound? If God be goodness it self, if his Mercies be infinite, was it not this goodness I ought to have applyed my self unto, by refraining from sin? Shall I dare, my God, to hope hereafter for Pardon, having been guilty of so great a presumption? Shall I dare to promise unto my self, any part in thy Goodness and Mercies, having so notoriously abused both? yes, my God, I dare, seeing thou hast not left those without hopes thereof, who penitently bewail their sins past, and truly convert themselves unto thee.

Resolution

Resolution.

NO more my God, no more as formerly. The hopes of thy Mercy shall no longer encourage me with more freedom to sin, but quicken the amendment of my life. The use I now intend to make of the remission, I expect, of my crimes, is not the deeper to engage my self therein, but the more effectually, and with more fidelity to detest them. I will no more say, my God, that thy Goodness is Infinite, to the end to offend thee with less fear, but with more constancy to love thee, and rather die, then ever to offend thee more.

Prayer.

THose Lights, my God, which dispel the darkness I have lived in; and sense thou hast given me,

me, not without confusion of my disorders past ; are no other than the present effect of thy Mercies, which I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. But yet are they but a preamble, in respect of that great and final work of Salvation, which still needs in order to its perfection, the Assistance of thy more Puissant Grace. These feeble Resolutions of mine must fall to nothing, if not supported by the force of thy divine Love. 'Tis all, my God, I can farther hope for at thy Hands, and what I humbly beg, through the Merits of thy only and dearest Son.

VIII. Meditation.

*Of Scandal.**Verity.*

WOe unto those, who give
Scandal.

• *Consideration.*

IT is thou, my God, who pronouncest this Malediction against those, through whose fault Scandal arrives; It is thou, who proclaimest in thy Holy Scriptures, by the Mouth of thy only Son, this so terrible an Anathema against all of either Sex, who become unto others an occasion of Sin. And how deserved an Anathema, how just a Malediction? For what is there more
un-

unworthy a Creature, than to contribute to the Offence of his Creator? What more unworthy a Christian, than to occasion the Damnation of those, whom *Jesus Christ* hath a Will to Save? What more unworthy a Person regenerated by Baptism, than to serve, as a snare unto the Devil, to entrap those, for whom the Son of God vouchsafed to shed his Blood? *Woe then to those who give Scandal.*

Reflection.

BUt is it not against me, that *Jesus Christ* pronounceth this so formidable a Curse? Is it not against me, that the Son of God fulminates so terrible a Malediction? Am not I of the number of those, whose whole Industry bends to a vain Adjustment of themselves, and spare no Artifice to enveigle others? One of those, who by the

cast of an Eye, by studded Expressions, by an immodest Dress, and other affected Gestures, have entangled so many? Have not I often said in my heart, Let him, if he will, displease God; what concerns it me? provided that I but please him: Let him Damn, if he will, himself; all that I will, is, that he but Love me.

Sorrow.

VV Hom doth not such an impiety strike with horror? And yet, my God, it is but what my heart hath had a Will to say, as often as I have occasion'd the Fall of others? How many Souls hath Hell swallowed up, on the account of my wanton Looks, my vain Attire, my freedom in Conversation; At least through my Advice and Solicitation, cavi-
ting them to Places of Debauch,
to

to Balls, to Comedies, to private Interviews, or other Divertisements, where Liberty gave but provocation unto Sin?

What cause have not I, my God, to fear Damnation, who have caused the Damnation of so many? Where, my God, shall I now find Mercy, when nothing from thee, but Malediction, can be expected? Great, above Expression, must the Scandals, which I have given, though without design of Offending thee be, so to oblige thee, who art the Fountain of all Benedictions, to proclaim thy Maledictions against me: I say to oblige thee, who art my Father, to Damn me. How much better had it been for me, had a Mill-stone been fastned to my Neck, and I therewith thrown into some River or Sea, than to have occasioned the Ruin of so many Souls: But my God, to whom shall I fly but unto thee. And in
this

this last of Extremities, who will, but thee, have Pitty on me? Let my Tears, my God, or rather let the precious Blood of thy dear and only Son, divert these Maledictions from falling on my head: Let my Sighs my God, or rather let those indeed of the Holy Ghost appease thy Wrath, restoring to me thy Love, and obtaining for me thy Benediction.

Resolution.

NO more, my God, of Modes offensive unto thee; No more of scandalous Dresses displeasing to *Jesus Christ*; No more of Levity in Conversation, destructive of divine Grace; No more of Portraitures shocking Modesty; no more of Treats, no more of private Interviews; no more of Glances, Smiles, or Gestures, only useful to the promoting the damnation of

of Souls. Come Death, my God, come Death, rather than ever to administer matter again of Sin, rather than ever to occasion again the Loss of Souls, for which *Jefus Christ* vouchsaf'd to shed his Blood.

Prayer.

IT is to Thee, my God, my Heart oweth the Resolution it hath here made: Support it with thy Grace, and I will be ever Faithful unto thee.

IX. Meditation:

Of the Conversion of a Sinner.

Verity.

THe chief Happiness of a Christian, consists in the Salvation of his Soul, as doth his greatest Misery in the eternal Loss thereof.

Consideration.

WHat greater Happiness can a Christian arrive unto, than the Possession of God Almighty, and that for all Eternity, in the Plenitude of his Glory? And in this doth Salvation consist. What greater Misery can befall a Christian, than to be for ever Banish'd from the Face of God, into the dread

dreadful Abyſs of Hell? And this is what Damnation imports. God is the only true Good a Chriſtian can pretend unto; the Poſſeſſion then of him is Perfect Happineſs; the Loſs of him, the height of Miſery.

Reflection.

NO Chriſtian doth, or can doubt of this, ſo Important a Verity; But how few, I ſay again, how few ſeriously reflect thereon? And as to my ſelf, how ſeldom have I hitherto laid it to heart, how ſeldom Allotted it in my Thoughts a Place? Other matters than this, though the greateſt and firſt of Verities, have been their Entertainment; applying, as I did, my ſelf with more ſolicitude to the Entrigues of the preſent Times, to the Maxims of the World, to the Artifice of improving

proving secular Interests, and other the like concerns, then to the Consideration of this so main, so prime a Truth; which now, through the operation of thy Grace, begins to make Impression on my Heart.

Sorrow:

HOW disordered, Oh my God! have my Thoughts, how great hath the discomposure of my Mind been; thus to have been wholly busied on fottish Vanities, on idle, and useless Curiosities, without once duely reflecting on this so sacred a Verity, which teacheth me, of what Consequence future Happiness is? Grant me, my God, the Grace of Tears, worthily to bewail these Disorders of mine.

Refo-

Resolution.

NO other Thoughts will I, my God, hereafter admit, then which shall promote the Salvation of my Soul. And the first of these great Verities, which shall hereafter enter into my serious Consideration, shall be that, which hath to day Taught me, that I cannot be happy, but in the Enjoyment of Thee; and that the eternal Loss of my self Inevitably follows the Loss of Thee.

Prayer.

IT is the Work, my God, of thy Mercy, which, by the Discovery of these great Truths, hath thus begun the Work of my Salvation. But touch, my God, unto the quick my heart, and imprint firmly in it the Love of that, which thou hast,
with

with all certainty, been graciously pleased to make known unto me.

X. Meditation.

On the same Subject.

Verity.

THe whole Care of a Christian ought to be to promote his own Salvation.

Consideration.

IF the proper motion of all creatures naturally carries them to their end, Man cannot, without an infringement of so generall a Law, place his cares on other Good then that of Beatitude, which is his End. And if a Part with the Saints be that where-

whereunto a Christian is called, he cannot secure this his Vocation, but by applying himself with a Christian fervour, to the practice of those actions which Christian piety prescribes. Justice and Piety are not to be sought for out of God ; All then which leads not unto him, can be but Vanity, and falshood, but sin and damnation.

Reflection.

Here it is my soul, that thou oughtest to assemble all thy thoughts ; and seriously to enquire, whether thou hast hitherto been a Christian : Whether dureing the whole course of thy life, thou hast put a diligent hand to the work of thy salvation : Whether thy heart, which cannot meet with its true repose but in God alone, hath bent all its motions towards him : And whether thou hast with

an

an holy Emulation embraced the Duties of a Christian Life. But will not a due reflection hereon lay open thy shame? Will it not convince thee, that the procurement of thy Salvation, hath been the least of all thy thoughts; and last of all thy cares? That the whole Course of thy Life hath been but a thirsting after Pleasures, a meer dotage on Vanities, and continual solicitude, which the embroilment of temporal concerns hath drawn thee into?

Sorrow.

VVith what Confusion ought not I to look back on this loose Life of mine, which hath so little favour'd of a Christian; so little done, in order to the securing the Concerns of a Life to come? Ah! my God, It cannot but argue me void of Sense, not
to

to dye through shame, so to have sacrificed my Heart, my Cares, my Time, and Actions of my Life to Vanity, to Interest, to Pleasure; in a word, to Creatures, to Sin; I, whose whole Thoughts, and sole Endeavours ought not to have Aim'd, but at the advancement of my Souls eternal Good; what will Honours, what will Riches, what Pleasures avail me, whilst I lose my self? What will the whole World advantage me, if, together with it, I Damn my self?

Resolution.

L Et it be Damn'd alone; As for my part, I here dedicate from this instant my whole Care, my whole Solitude, my All, to the carrying the great Work on of my Salvation. 'Tis what alone concerns me, the rest being all but Vanity. My Study shall hereafter be to please

Jesus,

Jesus Christ alone, in silence and solitude, as far as my state of Life, and Condition shall permit.

I will only from henceforth seek occasions of declaring a War to Vice, and making Grace to triumph by an austere course of mortification, and general retrenchment of whatsoever shall but serve to nourish sin, and set me at a distance with God. In fine, my whole Work shall be Prayer, Books of Devotion, a compliance with the obligations, my present State shall lay upon me, with such other Pious Exercises, as are suitable to the Life, and worthy the Character, and Vocation of a Christian.

Prayer.

TIs thou hast given me, my God, to understand, that I owe to my Salvation, my Thoughts, my Care, my Time. But thou knowest

est, how ineffectual without thee my strongest Resolutions, how fruitless my best Endeavours will prove. Support then, by thy powerful Hand, my Frailty; my future Happiness is more the Work of thy Grace, than my own Will. Perfect that then in me, which my whole force reacheth not, without thee unto.

XI. Meditation.

On the same Subject.

Verity.

UNless ye become Converted, ye shall all undoubtedly perish.

Con-

Consideration.

Shall Light shine unto him, who pleaseth himself in Darknes? Are Rewards and Crowns bestow'd on those, who merit the worst of Punishments? Shall the glory of the Saints be reserved for him, who Lives in sin? What Life then can he hope for, who remains in death? that is to say, What pretension can he have to Heaven, whose Conversion is the least, on Earth, of all his Cares? It is no less impossible for him, who refrains not from Sin, to attain unto Salvation; then it is for Sanctity to be a crime, for Heaven to be Hell, or for the Saints to become transform'd into Devils. Would sin be sin, could it pretend to a place above? Yea, would God be God, could he crown with Glory the sins of men?

It is God himself hath told us,
That if we become not Converted,
the Wrack of our Souls is una-
voidable. It is himself hath as-
sur'd us, that Converting not our
selves, he will Arm with Indignati-
on himself against us. (a)

Reflection.

IT is then but Truth, yes, my
God, as certain a truth as that
thou art, that where an hearty
and true Conversion is wanting,
Hopes of Salvation are in vain; that
God is no God for me, my Heart
still hanging after Sin. But this so
great, so sacred a Truth, threat-
ning thus the worst of Evils, have I
ever been sensible of? This Truth
teaching me, that sin and damnati-
on are inseparable, and that my
future Happiness depends on my
present change of Life; Hath it
inclined at all my Will to listen to

the Thought of my Conversion? My Life hath wasted it self in Pleasures, in Vanities, and other sensual Engagements; And I perceived not my self to be, by such an adhesion unto Creatures, hurried on to Damnation. I passed my time in Sin, and saw not, that whilst Sin reigned so in me, the Loss of my self could not but inevitably follow.

Sorrow.

AH! my God, cast me not away. My Life till now, 'tis true, hath been a Life of Sin. But my God, I now abhor it; and thou hast yet mercy for me in store: It is true, my God, that having lived without thee, and loved nothing less than thee, there is nothing I can pretend unto, nothing which I ought not justly to apprehend at thy Hands. And that it is, my
God,

God, which Afflicts me, who am resolved to Love hereafter, nothing but thee, and Fear nothing more than to be abandon'd by thee.

Resolution.

FROM this very moment, my God, I will no more think on Vanities, but with a contempt; no more on Pleasures, but with an Aversion; no more on Debauches, Hatred, Revenge, or what other Sin soever, but with a Detestation of them all.

Prayer.

BUt, my God, what Resolutions soever I make, no Conversion follows of the Heart, unless thou put an Hand unto the Work; Convert it then, my God, and I shall be assur'd of its being Converted unto thee.

XII. Meditation.

*Of the Mercy of God.**Verity.*

GOD hath not mercy but for Sinners.

Consideration.

THE Mercy of God being that which moveth him, through his sole Goodness, to Pardon the sins of Men, were they all Innocent, or could they glory in any merits of their own; God could not have for them but Justice, and Rewards; there can be no place for Pardon, where no Guilt is. It is for Sinners then alone, my God, thy Mercies are reserved.

Re-

Reflection.

What a weakness is it then to think, that God hath excluded me from Mercy, because I am a sinner, I ought rather to have believed, it being no less a Verity then of Faith, that were I not a sinner, he could not make me an object of his Mercy; If my guilt then causeth my confusion, his Mercy is that which ought to fill me with Consolation.

What blindness was it then, that looking not but on the disorders of my own life, and deformity of my own soul, I never cast an eye on the Grace and Goodness of him, who can only therefore shew mercy unto me, because he hath been by me offended: How often did I torture myself with the sole Apprehension of his Justice, when I ought to have whol-

ly cast my self into the Armes of his mercy.

Sorrow.

Pardon, my God, I ask Pardon for the Wrong I did thy Grace, whilst listning to those Sentiments of Grief and Fear, I only represented to my self the Enormity of my Crimes, and Rigours of thy Justice; as if thou wert without Mercy, or hadst reserved it for others than Sinners.

Resolution.

I Will no longer, my God, look on my own Crimes, but as the Object of thy Mercies; Nor will I any more abandon my self to the Apprehension of thy Justice, unless to the end, to shelter my self, with more Confidence, in the Bosom of thy Love.

Pra-

Prayer.

IMprint, my God, and that deeply, this Belief in my Heart, and there irremovably Engraft so great a Truth, to wit, that the sight of my Offences ought not to make me fly from, or retard my approach unto thee; it being the heighnoufness of my Guilt, which ought to raise my hopes of Pardon, and encourage me to repair with greater Assurance, to the Sanctuary of thy mercies.

XIII. Meditation.

*On the same Subject.**Verity.*

VHere Sin abounds most,
the Mercies of God do
most abound.

Consideration.

GOd's Mercy being no other
thing than God himself, and
in it self, infinite, as are all other
his divine Perfections; 'tis subject
neither to diminution, or encrease:
But considering it with relation un-
to men, it may well be said, that
the Sins of men are the measure of
God's mercy towards them; and
that our greatest Transgressions
need-

needing the greatest share of Mercy, they are his greatest Mercies, that greatest Sinners lay best claim unto.

Reflection.

HOW great was then my mistake, when amidst the disquiet I found my self in, I became perswaded, That the Enormity of my Crimes excluded me from all pretension unto Mercy? Ought not I rather to have known, That the Treasure of his Mercies being open but to Sinners; his greatest Mercies were what greatest Sinners had best Title unto? And that this divine Treasury of Mercy, being that which our Hopes ought solely to rely upon, the weightier I feel the Burden of my Sins, the greater ought my Confidence in him to have been; whose Graces are there most plentifully imparted, where Sin doth most abound.

Scr-

Sorrow.

ALl such Perswasions then, my God, I here absolutely renounce, and beg thy Pardon for having made them the Subject of my Disquiet, and Matter for my troubled Thoughts to feed on; having no other Thought of thee, than how, amidst the Apprehensions, the remembrance of thy Justice had bred in me, to fly, if I could, from thee.

Resolution.

IF Thoughts, my God, of this nature, any more disquiet me: If such Frights seize any more my Heart, I here disown them, I here renounce them all. I no less resolve, that the Sorrow due unto my Sins, shall hereafter flow from no other motive, than the Love of thee,

thee, and a firm reliance on thy Mercies; and purpose to Reject, as the worst of Temptations, whatsoever may diminish, or cause me to lose the Confidence, I ought to Repose in thee.

Prayer.

GRant me, O Father of Mercies, grant me, the vilest of thy Creatures, this Confidence, that it is for me, the greatest of thy Mercies are reserved. A Grace not to be expected but from thee, who art a God of Consolation.

XIV. Meditation.

On the same Subject.

Verity.

THE Mercies of God are greater than all the Sins, which ever have been, or can be committed.

Consideration.

I Readily subscribe unto this Truth, and willingly acknowledge, that the Bounty of my God being an undrainable source of Good, from which nothing of bad can flow; it cannot but exceed the malice of men, which excluding not the possibility of a change unto Good, cannot be an undrainable source of Bad.

Bad. And who can believe that the default of one particular Nature, can be drawn into comparison with the Perfections of a God, who cannot but be Infinite in all which he is.

Reflection.

WHy did not I then fix my Hopes upon this Mercy, which can pardon more than I can offend. If I think that God can shew Mercy unto me, but that the height of my Crimes merit that he cast me off, it is but Truth; but it is to destroy Mercy, and wholly to deprive God of his chiefest Attribute, not to acknowledge, that it being but for the Guilty, it is but for those who merit to be by him cast off.

If I say unto my self, that God can indeed shew Mercy unto me, but that he will not; 'tis too offensive unto Piety, and too much favours of Temerity, so to judge of the designs of God, which cannot

Q

but

but be hidden from me. The Enormity it self of my Crimes, how great soever, can lead to such a judgment no support; his greatest Mercies pouring most themselves then forth, when greatest Sinners need them.

If, in fine, my Anxiety transport me so far, as to desire to know whether or no God will forget my Offences, and shew me Mercy; It is to have a Will to penetrate too far into his Counsells, and to pretend unto a Priviledge, not granted even to Souls the most Elect. Are not his own Word, and the Testimony of my own Conscience a sufficient assurance thereof? His Word, when by the mouth of a Prophet he tells me, *That from the moment, that a sinner shall desist from sin, and do Penance, he will forget his iniquities*: The Testimony, in fine, of my own Conscience assures me, that my heart, having
through

through God's Grace, sin, in no less than abomination, and dreading nothing more than the committing it, is resolyed to Love God alone, who cannot abandon those who Love Him.

Sorrow.

After so many, so great assurances of the Mercies of my God, who sought me when I fled from him, and drew me to himself, when I was so fast linked unto the World, and most engaged in Sin, What an Ingratitude is it, what a Confusion to be won with so much difficulty to repose that confidence in him, which is due unto him, and to rest entirely satisfied therein? Ah! my God forgive me.

Resolution.

I Will no longer lend Attention to what that Sorrow shall suggest, which is accompanied with so little of Love; nor listen to the fallacious way of reasoning, used by

that Fear which is so much a stranger unto Hope : 'Tis to render ones self blind, to have a will to know too much : It sufficeth, my God, to know, that thy Goodness surpasseth my malice, to render me assur'd, that my Crimes shall never exhaust the Infinity of thy Mercies.

Prayer.

BUt my God, who, but thy self, can give me that confidence which relyeth on thee alone. It is what I ask of Thee through the Merits of *Jesus Christ* thy Son, deny it me not.

XV. Meditation.

On the same Subject.

Verity.

THe worst of all the Evils can befall a Soul, is to despair of the Remission of his Sins, and to believe, that

that all the Gates of Mercy are shut against him.

Consideration.

IT was the Sin of *Cain*; who did not so great an injury to God, by unnaturally embrewing his fratricide hands in his Brothers innocent Blood, as when he said, that his Crime was too great to hope for Pardon. It was this Despair of his, which compleated his Reprobation. God, who is all Goodness, cannot dispence his Graces, and not effectually excite us at the same time to love them: Nor can this Love but enkindle in us a desire of them. So that as the first of his Mercies is, that which Inspires us with a desire of them; so is it the last, and greatest of miseries, to despair of obtaining them.

Reflection.

WHat Blindness! This last and worst of Evils is what I fear, and I perceive not that the

fear I have of falling thereunto, is the only thing which engageth me deepest therein. Ah ! how often hath this fear caused me to say, that the guilt of so many Crimes, which lye so heavy on me, cannot but exclude me from all hopes of Pardon ; but did not, alas, reflect, that this despair of Pardon, was that which rendred me most unworthy of it. Nor did I consider, that the too great apprehension I had of being debarred from the Mercies of my God, might occasion the loss of that only Good, which I most desire.

Sorrow.

IT is, my God, this Love, and the desire I have of thy Mercy, which makes me bewail in thy sight the wrong I did unto it, by the thought I harboured, that my Crimes were above all hopes of Pardon ; and for this it is I now recurr unto thy Mercy.

Reso-

Resolution.

NO more then of these Fears, which serve not but to bar up my heart against thy Mercies. A firm confidence on thy Love is what from this very moment I resolve, as I ought, upon. And purpose to renounce, as the greatest of Evils, whatsoever may endanger this so Amorous a confidence, which thy will is I should have in thy Mercies.

Prayer.

Support, my God, with the Force of thy Grace, this Resolution which thy Love inspires; and strengthen this so Holy an Alliance of the Sorrow due to my Sins, with that firm Confidence thou commandest me to lodge on the Abundance of thy Goodness.

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